

THE LIFE OF OUR LORD

Written for Little Ones

“Suffer the little children
to come unto Me”

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JESUS AND JOHN.
(From the Picture by Pinturicchio.)

The Life of Our Lord

Written for Little Ones

BY
MOTHER MARY SALOME

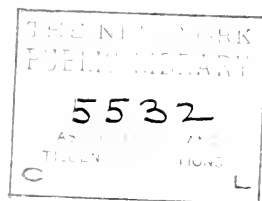
Of the Bar Convent, York

“Suffer the little children to come unto Me.”—ST. MARK x. 14

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Part I.

LIFE OF OUR LORD.

I.

INTRODUCTION.

"TELL us a story!" Was there ever a child who grew up without saying those words, and saying them so often that he tired the patience of all about him—father, mother, brothers, sisters, nurse even.

"Tell us a story, please, and may it be a true one?" That is the way many children put their request, and very sensible they are. For what is true must be more interesting than mere make-up. Stories about real warriors who fought fierce battles and conquered, of heroes who did generous deeds, of kings who were feared by their enemies, and loved and served by their friends—these are the stories for them. Or stories of those they love, of what father did when he was a boy, or how grandfather won the Victoria Cross, etc., to these they listen spell-bound.

There is a story better than all these, one about a Warrior Who fought a battle single-handed and conquered, of a Hero whose whole life was a series of great and generous deeds, of a King before Whom His enemies trembled, and Whom His friends adored, One Whom we are bound to love more than our nearest and dearest. It is a true story too, and a long one. Will it interest us or shall we not care much about it? Shall we read it when we are obliged, like a lesson, and like a lesson lay it down when the time is up and think no more about it?

Surely not. Our Lord is the true Hero-King, and the story of His life must interest us. It is the life of One we do really love and Whom we shall love more and more as we hear more about Him. For this life is not like the life of other people. It was lived for us, for each one of us—it is mine, I can take everything in it home to myself; I can say that loving word was said *to me*, that pain was borne *for me*, that grace was won *for me*. Think of that! Can such a thing be said of the life of any one else in the world? What did the heroes of long ago care for me? Their example does me good, but they did not think of me when they performed their wonderful deeds.

But our Lord did think of me; I, poor and

little as I am, was present to Him all His life through ; in each action He performed He thought of my good. Shall I not be interested in Him ?

Think of the time before that life was lived—the time of the Old Law. Men looked upon God as a long way off, as One far above them. They thought of Him as One “Who dwelt in light inaccessible, Whom no man hath seen, nor can see.” They worshipped Him and feared Him, but they found it hard to love Him.

God knew it was hard. What could He do to help them ?

Look at that little child standing on tip-toe trying to reach its father's face. Look at it stretching its baby arms as far as ever they can go. Poor little thing, how helpless it is ! Father is far off and it cannot reach him alone. But see, he bends down to it ; lower and lower he bends till his face is on a level with the child's—now it can touch him, now it is happy. The fat hands are laid on his cheeks, the rosy lips kiss his with great love. And the father takes it up in his arms and off they go together.

God stooped to our littleness. He came down from His Throne in Heaven, down even to our level, and took up our human nature. The day came when there was a

God-man, God in the form of a little child. And He grew as the children of men grow. He worked as they work, and His working made Him weary. He suffered want, and hunger, and thirst, and cold; and sorrow came upon Him. For thirty-three years He lived upon earth and then He died. Oh, how He died! Think of Him on the Cross. Think of the wide wounds in His hands and feet, the beautiful head crowned with thorns, the Precious Blood trickling into His dim eyes—oh, how He died!

And this life — *the life He led*, and this death—*the death He died*, were the best His infinite Wisdom could choose, to show man what Divine Love is, to draw men's hearts to love Him in return. What a Life that must be, and what a Death, that would satisfy an infinite love! Will they not interest us?

When our Lord left this earth He took care that those who lived after Him should know how much He had loved them—loved each one of them. He might have kept the story of His Life for Heaven and Eternity, but He wanted us to begin on earth to love Him personally. He wanted us to get to talk about Him, to learn of Him as those favoured ones did who loved Him on earth.

That we might know Him in this way He inspired four of His friends to write down for

us what He did and said when He was in the world. These four friends of His are the Apostles St. Matthew and St. John, and two disciples of the Apostles, St. Mark and St. Luke. To these four a beautiful title is given. They are called Evangelists, that is "Bringers of good tidings." There are twelve Apostles, many hundreds of martyrs, thousands of virgins, but only four of God's saints bear the sweet title of Evangelist. We could fancy Isaias the prophet was speaking to one or other of them when he cried out so joyfully : "Get thee upon a high mountain, thou that bringest good tidings to Sion : lift up thy voice with strength, thou that bringest good tidings to Jerusalem ; lift it up, fear not. Say to the cities of Juda, 'Behold your God.'"

And they have lifted up their voices and proclaimed everywhere that their Master was the Messiah, that He was God, and that He lived and died and rose again as the prophets foretold.

This story of theirs, the Life of our Lord and King, is ours now. For two thousand years it has been in the keeping of the Church. Millions of her children have learnt from it all their heavenly wisdom. And we must make it our business to study it, to love it, to learn from it. When we die we shall be judged by our likeness to our Lord ; and how can we be like

Him if we know nothing about Him! We have brains and time and taste for reading of every kind. What a shame it would be, if for the study of One Who is our Model, our King, our God, we had no mind, nor leisure, nor inclination.

Perhaps the most awful sentence in the Gospel is that cry of the demons: "What have we to do with Thee, Jesus of Nazareth?" It was a cry of despair that needed no answer; they knew they had no hope, no share in the Redeemer of mankind. Thank God a thousand, thousand times, it is not so with us. We have everything to do with Him, and He with us. What He is to us, and what we must be to Him, we shall find in the story of His Life.

Our Lord once gave a Scripture lesson to two of His disciples whom He met on their walk. He found them talking about His life and death, and He joined them and took up their conversation. He went a long way back into the history of their people, and showed them how He had been pointed out from the beginning by His prophets. He explained to them what those prophecies meant, and opened their minds that they might understand what He told them. It was as if He had opened the meaning of the Scriptures with a key, so that when He was gone they cried out: "Was

not our heart burning within us, whilst He spoke in the way, and opened to us the Scriptures?" (Luke xxiv.)

We have not Him by our side to explain all this to us, but if we go over some of the same ground, we may come to understand better what He has done for us, and may be led to know Him and to love Him better than we have ever done before.

II.

IN THE BEGINNING.

“Wast Thou not from the beginning, my Lord,
My God, my Holy One?”

“Why was God the Son made man for us?”
“To redeem us from sin and hell.”

WE learnt that answer of the Catechism when we were very little, perhaps before we could speak plain. But now we want to know how we came to have to do with sin and hell, and how we were saved from eternal punishment.

This question takes us a long way back in the world's history ; but it is such an important one that we must find the answer, no matter how far we have to go in search of it.

Thousands of years ago two streams rolled out of a mountain-side, and made for the land where the sun rises. One, the Tigris, after a little turn to the north wended its way to the south-east. The other, the Euphrates, turned straight to the south, then suddenly, as if by appointment, flowed westward, and midway in its course met the other river. Then the two

mingled their waters together, and together they fell into a southern sea.

They were beautiful rivers, and the land they enclosed was beautiful, so beautiful that when God looked down on the fresh new earth He had just created He could find no lovelier spot for His Paradise. There, then, between the two brother-rivers, and two other rivers as beautiful, He planted His Garden of Pleasure.

And, oh, how grand He made it. There were groups of stately cedars with wide-spreading branches, avenues of plane-trees with glossy leaves. By the water palm-trees grew and spread out their fan-like branches against the sky. Delicate spring flowers, rich summer roses, and bright autumn blossoms scented the air. In amongst the flowers the lambs played; they trod so lightly that there was no fear of their crushing the tender stalks. Up and down the wide paths strode huge elephants, but they picked their way with care not to disturb the birds at their morning meal. The wolves, gentle as dogs, ran races on the plains. At the water-brooks lions drank with fawns at their side, bears rested in the groves and made room beside them for the little kids when they were tired of play. And there was such play in Paradise, such bright happy play.

And how gloriously God's sun shone over all! There was no fierce glare, no scorching

heat. It softened its rays to suit the tenderest blade of grass. It bathed the earth with beauty. It brought out the colour of the tiniest flower and shone in the waters till they glistened like gold. Paradise was very beautiful, *and it was all for man.*

One day, when the gardens were in full bloom and the fruit ripe, Almighty God created Adam : " Let us make man to Our own Image and Likeness," He said, and He took the slime of the earth and made it into a body. You cannot think what a beautiful thing the body of the first man was. St. Paul tells us it was " incorruptible." That means it could not grow old, nor suffer, nor die. It was perfect in form, in strength, and in beauty.

But man's soul was far grander than his body. It was not taken from the earth, it was like to God, " a spirit and immortal." God breathed upon Adam, and the breath of God produced his soul. And his soul by sanctifying grace partook of the Divine nature and became " the image and glory of God."

And God treated him as His beloved son. He took him into Paradise and made him lord of creation. He presented the animals to him as they came up from all parts. The lions crouched at his feet, the tigers licked his hands, the birds sang in the lowest branches of the trees as he passed.

On towards the middle of Paradise God led Adam. They passed trees laden with fruit ; park-lands sweet with scented herbs ; all were his, his "to dress and to keep." Adam was silent. How could he speak when his heart was so full !

In the middle of Paradise God showed him a tree with the ripe fruit hanging from its branches. And God spoke to him. Very solemnly He spoke : "Of every tree of Paradise thou shalt eat ; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil thou shalt not eat. For in what day soever thou shalt eat of it, thou shalt die the death."

Only one little act of obedience to prove his love for his Creator ! What a little thing to command, Adam thought. And he made a firm resolution never to eat, never to touch the fruit of that tree.

Time went on. Adam named all the beasts of the field ; he taught them to do his bidding ; they were docile and loving, but not one amongst them understood him. When he spoke to them they looked wistfully into his face, put their paws on to his lap, but could not understand him.

"'Tis not good for man to be alone," God said, and He created Eve. If Adam was beautiful, Eve was lovely. Her soul, like his, was immortal ; her body incorruptible, like his ;

her mind capable of understanding his. She was "his helper," and they loved each other as only those who love God can love. He showed her all the glories of Paradise, called up the animals to do her homage, and gave her the flowers to look after. Then he took her to the tree in the midst of Paradise and told her of God's command. He explained what the words "Die the Death" meant. He knew nothing of death—separation of the soul from the body, as we know it, that is, by experience; but he understood better than we can what death—the separation of the soul from God—must mean, for he was as a son to God in Paradise.

What a happy life they spent together! They worked in the garden and fed the beasts and birds. They studied the habits of the animals, the kinds of trees and flowers, and they learned to understand the movements of the sun, moon and stars. And the more they learned about God's glorious works, the prouder they were of their Creator and the more they praised Him.

But what they liked best of all were the afternoon walks in Paradise; for God came to them and "gave them instructions." Just think what God's instructions must be like! Should we not listen if God Himself came to talk to us? And they listened and "their ears heard His glorious voice" and

"their eye saw the majesty of His glory." Yet He told them He had more glorious things in store for them when they had proved their love. They shall reign with Him in glory—"shall see His Face and His Name shall be written on their foreheads."

One day Eve wandered near to the forbidden tree and saw a serpent coiled round its trunk. She felt curious; she had never seen an animal so near that tree before. Presently the serpent, who was the devil come to tempt her, spoke:

"Why hath God commanded you that you should not eat of every tree in Paradise?" Eve looked up. She waited a moment, and then answered slowly:

"Of the fruit of the trees that are in Paradise we do eat, but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of Paradise God hath commanded us that we should not eat, and that we should not touch it lest perhaps we die."

Lest perhaps we die. God had not said that, and Eve knew very well He had not. "Thou shalt die the death," were His words.

"No," said the serpent, "you shall not die the death." Eve listened, and thought it seemed true. "The fruit was good to eat, fair to the eye, and delightful to behold." Why should it kill her to eat it? Why should she not at least touch it? There was a moment's pause. The angels watched and prayed. An

instant Eve stood wavering and uncertain ; then she stretched out her hand and "took of the fruit thereof, and did eat and gave to her husband who did eat." God's command was broken, Adam's race was lost.

"Why hast thou done this?" God said to Eve. How sad His voice sounded in her ear!

"The serpent deceived me and I did eat."

God spoke to the serpent. The words He spoke were words of anger to him, but of mercy to us. They are the most merciful words God ever spoke, they are the beginning of all His mercy to us. Listen :

I will put enmities between thee and the woman, and thy seed and her seed ; she shall crush thy head and thou shalt lie in wait for her heel. It is as if God had said to the wicked spirit : "The children of men are your slaves now ; but I will send One Who will break their bonds. You have conquered a woman, and by a woman your power shall be crushed.

To sin mortally is to become the slave of the devil. Adam had sinned mortally and had become his slave. As he was not merely the father of all mankind, but in his great trial its representative as well, his children were slaves also. Now from this slavery none but God could buy them back, none but He could break their bonds. And He did break them. He broke them now by

the glorious promise, and He fulfilled His promise by sending His only begotten Son into the world.

Who is this woman of whom God speaks? She is Mary Immaculate, who was never in the power of the devil, and whose Divine Son *put enmities* between us and the evil one.

What a joy it would have been to Adam and Eve if they could have seen on the earth they had made so sad, Mary, the second Eve, and "Jesus, the Flower of a Virgin Mother"? How they would have thanked God for making their fault right for them, right in such a way that their children instead of blaming them cry out "O happy fault!" For we, their children, have received more grace by our Redemption than was lost to us by their disobedience. But Adam and Eve did not know all this; they only knew that God, in infinite mercy, was promising great things to them.

Look at them listening to God's words. Look at the tears falling down their white faces, tears of contrition, the first tears they have ever shed. They know now what it is to sin, to offend One Whom they love with their whole strength. Their hearts are wrung with sorrow, but He has forgiven them, saved them from eternal death, received them back into His love. The rest of their punishment is

easy to bear : Sickness, hunger, cold, hard work, want, pain, fear. What are these to endless loss of God !

As soon as Adam and Eve had sinned they were turned out of the Garden. Night came, the first night outside Paradise. It was dark ; the stones cut their tender feet, the briars tore their hands, the wind was bleak and cold. Eve shivered and drew round her the skin garment God had made for her. In the distance the wild beasts roared savagely. Poor Adam and Eve ! they are getting to know what evil their sin has done now. The earth is desolate, for it is cursed by God ; they are forlorn and out-cast ; yet, deep down in their hearts is God's glorious promise. It strengthens and cheers them in their long life of toil. Over and over again they tell each other that a Redeemer will come and save their race, that one day God will take them out of this life of suffering and sorrow. They will "see Him face to face."

Of course the promise of a Redeemer was not made to Adam and Eve for themselves only ; it concerned every one of their children. How glad Adam would be to tell them all about it, and to explain how good God had been to him and to them.

Now Adam lived nine hundred years, so you can imagine what a great number of children

and grandchildren he would see, and how eager they would be to know everything about those old days when their grandparents lived in the beautiful Garden of Paradise.

After a hard day's work Adam would sit outside his tent with the little ones round him and tell them over and over again how the fierce lions had once been as gentle as lambs, how the tigers had eaten out of his hand, how the wolves had played about like their own sheep-dogs. Or, when he was in a more serious mood, he would tell them of that dreadful day when he and Eve listened to the serpent and disobeyed God. He would tell them how, in fear and trembling, they had hidden themselves from Him, and how when the afternoon came God called them to Him and made them confess their sin. Then Adam would tell of the dreadful punishment that followed, and how they lost the earthly Paradise and would have lost the heavenly one had it not been for the blessed promise. And he would repeat it word for word, and solemnly command them to hand it down to their children. The remembrance of it, he said, would make them praise God and thank Him for His mercy to them, and make them ever on the watch for the Redeemer.

Adam's children were faithful in this—they did hand down the promise.

But three thousand years is a long time to

live on hope, a long time to wait and watch and look forward. So to make the waiting easier, God renewed His promise from time to time. To Sem, Noe's son, He renewed it ; to Abraham, the father of the children of God ; to Isaac, and to Jacob ; to Juda. Then there was a long silence. But one word of hope was spoken during the four hundred years of Egyptian slavery, and whilst the children of Israel fought for the land of Chanaan. But when King David, the man after God's own heart, was seated firmly on the throne the promise was again renewed.

Solomon, David's son, was to be the type of One Whose reign over men should be eternal. *I will establish the throne of His Kingdom for ever*, were the words spoken to David, not Solomon's Kingdom of Israel, for that could not last for ever, but that of Solomon's Descendant, Jesus Christ, our Lord. His Kingdom on earth will last to the end of time, and in Heaven throughout all eternity.

Another thousand years passed away, and then in a little room in Nazareth the same words were again repeated. God the Faithful and True fulfilled His promise. The Messiah-King descended from heaven, and the four thousand years of waiting were at an end.

III.

THE KING FORETOLD.

“They shall see the glory of the Lord, and the beauty of our God.”—Is. xxxv.

Picture to yourself a dark street on a winter's night, not a spark of light to be seen anywhere. Then imagine a lamplighter going by, who, with a touch of his torch, kindles first one bright light and then another. What a difference those bright lamps make! What a cheeriness they shed about them! The passers-by catch the gleams as they hurry on their road, and pass on more hopefully.

Of all the dark times the world has seen those years of waiting for the Messiah were the darkest. Israel and even surrounding nations knew that a Redeemer was to come—the promise told them this—but they knew no more. The time and manner of His coming was God's secret. They saw around them wickedness and misery, degradation and sorrow, and longed for the day of salvation: *Shew unto us Thy Face, Thou that sittest on the Cherubim*, they cried; *Stir up Thy might and come and save us.*

At last God listened to the people He loved and sent them tidings of the Redeemer. He cheered the gloomy time, and lit them through the night. This He did by means of prophets, holy men, His lamplighters, to whom He gave power to foretell, some seven hundred years before the wonder coming of the Messiah. They foresaw the events of His life, scenes from His passion, the glory of His Kingdom, and they related them to the waiting people, that "nation expecting, expecting."

There was another reason for these prophecies. God wanted His Son to be recognised and welcomed when He came. So He gave the Jews certain marks by which they would know Him, marks which no other King, or prophet, or saint could show, and He had these marks or characteristics written down that all might study them, and be on the look-out for one who possessed them.

If we go over some of these ancient prophecies and compare them later with the events of our Blessed Lord's life and death, we shall see that not one of the marks foretold by the prophets is wanting to our King-Messiah.

The mother of the Messiah was to be a Virgin:

"Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and His name shall be called Emmanuel" (Isaias vii.), ("which, being interpreted, is *God with us*").

He was to be born in the little town of Bethlehem :

“And thou Bethlehem Ephrata art a little one among the thousands of Juda ; out of thee shall He come forth unto me that is to be the Ruler in Israel.” (Micheas v.)

“A Child is born to us and a Son is given to us, and the government is upon His shoulder, and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, God, the Mighty, the Father of the world to come, the Prince of peace.” (Isaias ix.)

The great and the wise were to come from a distance to visit Him :

“The multitude of camels shall cover Thee, the dromedaries of Madian and Ephra ; all they from Saba shall come bringing gold and frankincense and shewing forth praise to the Lord.” (Isaias lx.)

On His account so cruel a deed was to be committed that mothers would wring their hands in anguish :

“A voice in Rama was heard, lamentation and great mourning ; Rachel bewailing her children and would not be comforted because they are not.” (Jeremias xxxi.)

He was to be taken into Egypt and brought back at the command of God Himself :

“Out of Egypt have I called my Son.” (Osee xi.)

Like a great King He was to have one to go before Him, a precursor to make ready the hearts of His people :

“Behold I send My angel and he shall prepare the way before My Face.” (Malachias vi.)

In character He was to be meek and humble of heart :

“He shall not cry nor have respect to persons, neither shall His voice be heard abroad. The bruised reed He shall not break and the smoking flax He shall not quench. . . He shall not be sad nor troublesome.” (Isaias xlii.) . . . the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon Him, the spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the spirit of counsel and of fortitude, the spirit of knowledge and of piety. And He shall be filled with the spirit of the fear of the Lord.” (Isaias xi.)

Much of His life was to be spent in working miracles :

“God Himself will come and save you. Then shall the eyes of the blind be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as a hart and the tongue of the dumb shall be free.” (Is. xxxv.)

He was to be a King and have a triumph ; but a triumph in poverty and meekness :

“Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Sion, shout O daughter of Jerusalem. Behold thy King will come to thee, the Just and Saviour ; He is

poor and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass" (Zacharias ix.)

Such prophecies as these the Jews read eagerly. For from them they gathered their Messiah was to be a great One of this earth. But there were other prophecies, other marks foretold which they did not seem to notice in the prophets. They hated dishonour and pain, they loathed the thought of shame and sorrow and death. And yet these things were predicted of the true Messiah. Clearly and fearlessly Isaias and the prophets tell them what they must expect of Him Who was to redeem Israel :

"The kings of the earth stood up and the princes met together against the Lord, and against His Christ."

One of His own, whom He loved would turn against Him :

"Yea, Mine own familiar friend in whom I trusted, who did eat of My bread hath lifted up His heel against Me" (Ps. xli.)

He was to be sold for thirty pieces of silver :

"So they weighed for My price thirty pieces of silver" (Zacharias xi.)

He was to be :

"Despised and the most abject of men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with infirmity. . . . He was wounded for our iniquities,

He was bruised for our sins' (Isaias liii.)

In another place Isaias speaks of the Messiah in His own person :

"I have given My body to the strikers and My cheeks to them that plucked them ; I have not turned away My face from them that rebuked Me and spat upon me " (Isaias l.)

"They pierced My hands and feet ; they numbered all My bones. And they have looked and stared upon Me. They parted My garments amongst them and upon My vesture they cast lots " (Ps. xxi.)

In His direst need, a bitter drink was to be given to Him :

"They gave Me gall for My food, and in My thirst they gave Me vinegar to drink " (Ps. lxviii.)

Were not these marks clear enough ? Even the kind of death is foretold. The "pierced hands and feet" speak of crucifixion, the most disgraceful and painful of punishments. But the Jews *would* not understand. They wanted to be as glorious a nation as they had been in Solomon's reign, and have a glorious King whose renown would spread into distant lands and bring fame and wealth and happiness to Israel once more.

Some of us, perhaps, may wonder why God

Who loved the Jews so much, did not give them the kind of King they wanted. Why our Blessed Lord did not come as their Hero-King and make them a glorious nation?

Suppose He had? Would such a little human work as that have been worthy of our God? One man can conquer another. But our Lord came to crush the devil whom no one without Him could crush; to teach us the *best* way, the only safe way to Heaven, to make our life full of merit and happiness. This was a work worthy of Him, God though He was. To do this He had to choose the proper means, and He did choose them—not human glory, nor power, nor wealth, but *humiliation and the Cross*.

It would have been easy and pleasant for Him to have come as a King and a Conqueror and He would have received a triumphant welcome from His people. We know how pleased we are when people are glad to see us, and we know, too, how painful it is to feel that we are not wanted and that we are in the way. Even little children understand this feeling.

A very little child was brought into the drawing-room to see some visitors. After a few kind words, the ladies and gentlemen returned to their conversation and took no further notice of the child. Mounted on a chair, Babs looked wonderingly around at the company for some time. No, it was quite

evident nobody was speaking of her, nobody was noticing her. So with a little sob she slid from her seat and walked to the door. With the handle in her hand she turned round and said, by way of explanation for her sudden departure, "I see I am not wanted here." She was a very human little child and liked notice.

Let us remember our Lord is human, too, and likes to be wanted. He knew if He came poor and humble He would get no welcome—He would not be wanted—and yet He chose poverty and humiliation because they were the best means to gain His end of His coming.

He came to found a kingdom on earth, that was to be the ante-chamber of the Kingdom of Heaven. An ante-chamber is a place where preparations are made, things set in order, last touches given. Such is our Lord's Kingdom here. We have to be got ready for the Kingdom of Heaven, and it costs so much. There is so much to be done at ourselves, so much to be put aside, so much to be put right, so much to be suffered. Our Lord's subjects have to be generous, courageous, ready for any sacrifice.

And He knew this. He knew we should require something stronger than words to make us enrol ourselves under His banner. So He came Himself to be our Model, our King and Leader. He would go first to suffer first and to suffer most, to smooth the way for

us step by step. He says to us, "Take up thy Cross," but He adds immediately, "*Follow Me.*" We look up and see Him carrying a cross, *His* Body covered with wounds, *His* Soul sorrowful even unto death, and our hearts go out to Him. What a King to follow, to live and to die for!

Then we look at *our* Cross, and measure it and weigh it, and we find it is such a little one compared to His. It has been cut down to suit our size, the angles pared off not to wound us too much, and it is laid with great gentleness on our shoulder. Yet little as it is we are not expected to carry it alone. Simeon of Cyrene helped Jesus to carry His Cross, but Jesus Himself helps us to carry ours.

Do you see why our Lord chose the Way of the Cross?

And now we have finished the Old Law with its promise and prophecies, and we turn eagerly, joyously to the New Law, with its promise carried out, its prophecies fulfilled. It is like going from night into bright day—from darkness into strong light.

IV.

THE MOTHER OF THE KING.

“Thou art all fair, and there is no spot in thee.”

—CANT. iv.

HOLY Scripture tells us wonderful things of the Eastern Kings in ancient times. It tells us how splendidly they lived, of their palaces paved with pophyry and white marble, embellished with wonderful paintings, of their golden and silver beds, of their feasts which lasted sometimes hundreds of days together. We read how powerful they were—absolute monarchs of life and death, in the great kingdoms they governed, and how none dared to oppose their will.

Assuerus, King of Assyria, once sent orders throughout his empire that certain rebels were to be destroyed, men, women and children. The order was obeyed, for *No man durst gainsay the letters which were sent in the King's name and were sealed with his ring.* So thousands of innocent people were put to the sword. This same King in his anger *was terrible to behold* (Est. xv.) Esther, his Queen, whom he

loved more than anyone on earth, trembled when she had to visit him. It was like going *into the presence of a lion*, she said.

Yet these kings, so hard and stern to their subjects, so cruel to their enemies, often had one tender spot in their hearts. They were gentle and docile to their mothers. Baltassar, King of Babylon, a reckless reveller up to the last night of his life, listened to the advice given him by his Queen-mother. Cyrus, the powerful sovereign and successful conqueror, would not marry without the consent of his mother Mandana.* And Solomon, who exceeded all the kings of the earth in riches and wisdom, could not bear to refuse anything to his beautiful mother Bethsabée. On a certain day Adonias, one of his personal enemies, begged her to ask a favour from Solomon her son, for, said he, "he cannot deny thee anything." So Bethsabée went into the presence of the King and he "arose to meet her, and bowed to her, and sat upon his throne, and a throne was set for the King's mother and she sat on his right hand." "My mother ask," he said, "for I must not turn away thy face." And without fear Bethsabée made her request to the King.

These kings loved their mothers, and loved them, no doubt, because they remembered all the ceaseless watchfulness, unselfish care, tender

* Fredet, "Ancient His."

sympathy and boundless compassion they had shown to them in childhood. But there was a King who loved His Mother more than all these. And He loved her because He created her, for He was God. He chose her out of thousands and made her after the pattern His heart loved best. She was to be His Mother, the Mother of God, so she had to be perfect in soul and body. What a soul and body that must be which God meant to be perfect in the highest possible degree! Let us think for a few moments what gifts He would give to one who was to be His own Mother.

God's first gift is purity. He is giving it all day long, all the world over. The souls of little children come into the world stained by sin, so they are carried to the church and, by holy Baptism, are washed and made pure and beautiful. But this purity was not enough for the Mother of God. When we see a white robe stained we say, "Ah, what a pity! It will wash, but it will never look the same again." Mary's soul was never to be sin-stained, never to be washed, but to come glistening and pure from the hands of God. This is what is meant by *Immaculate Conception*—a soul unstained from the first moment of life. There is only one such soul, Mary's. You remember the words God spoke to the devil in Paradise: "I will put enmities between thee and the woman,

and thy seed and her seed ; she shall crush thy head, and thou shalt lie in wait for her heel." Enmities means hatred, and hatred comes from a difference of will. Now there never could be a greater enmity, a greater difference of will than between one who never sinned at all and one who is steeped in sin and nothing but sin. Mary is the sinless one and Satan full of sin. This was the enmity God promised in Paradise, and Mary was the woman who, by her Immaculate Conception, crushed the serpent's head.

Mary was created in friendship with God, that is in grace. Grace must be something gloriously bright, for when the Beloved Disciple speaks of the angels and saints in Heaven, he describes them as wearing robes *white as snow, glittering and white*, as *girt with golden girdles, with golden crowns upon their heads*, figures of the grace that adorns their souls. But when he speaks of Mary, whom he saw in a vision, he can only compare what he saw with a "*woman clothed with the sun*." She was so full of grace, so dazzling beautiful. The saints, the angels could not compare with her. They glittered, but she shone.

Grace is the most wonderful of God's gifts. It makes those who receive it "partakers of the Divine Nature." Think how lavishly He would pour into Mary's soul a gift that would

make her akin to Himself, worthy, in some measure to be the Mother of His Son. With us, through our own fault, grace is like a tide struggling hard to come in and stay, which sometimes advances a little, but often enough falls back a very long way. Mary's grace is like the calm broad ocean, ever at the full, filling every fibre of her being and increasing as she increased in age and dignity.

Immaculate and full of grace, God had yet other gifts to give His Mother. He created her as He created us to His own image and likeness, giving her the three wonderful gifts of a human soul—memory, understanding, and will. But this image of His in Mary's soul was absolutely perfect, in the degree her office required. Her understanding made her fit to guide and guard, to live and sympathise with a Child Who was God. Her memory was wide and deep enough to hold all the words and actions of those thirty-three years her Son passed upon earth. So that when the evangelists later on sat at her feet and asked her to tell them of bygone times she spoke of past events as if they were present.

Her will was free, and not hampered by the consequences of original sin. Mary joined her will to God's will as the only possible good. She saw the perfect thing

and did it with all her mind and all her strength. This is why she is so unlike us. Our will has been weakened by original sin and by every sin we have willingly committed. So we see the right thing, yet consent to the wrong. Oh, dear Mother, help us to keep from sin!

Mary is a titled Lady—she is *Mother of God*. People are proud of their titles because they are marks of distinction which raise them above the common level. The titles of the youngest sovereign of Europe, Alphonsus of Spain, are greater in number than any other crowned head can boast of. But what are these compared to Mary's? A title derives its dignity from the person who gives it and from the cause for which it is given. Mary's comes from the King of Kings and was given to her because she was to be the Mother of God. No other title but Mother of God would have been enriched with such a dowry. Mary saw future ages singing her praises, not because she was anything of herself—she was only a “hand-maid,”—but being Mother of God *all generations shall call me blessed*, she said. And so they have done and so they will do for ever. Think of our hymns to our Lady centuries old—the “Alma Redemptoris Mater,” “Salve Regina;” think of her Litany, sung all over

the world, with its list of sweet titles: "Mother most pure, Virgin most merciful, Cause of our joy, Mystical Rose, Morning Star, Comfort of the Afflicted, Queen of Virgins, Queen conceived without original sin." These are the praises that rise up from Catholic hearts to the throne in Heaven, where Mary now sits a Queen. Glorious King Solomon rose to meet his mother and placed her on a throne and said: "My Mother ask, for I must not turn away thy face." And so did He Who is greater than Solomon do to His Blessed Mother. When her life on earth was ended, He crowned her Queen of His Heavenly Kingdom and seated her at His right hand, and He says: "My Mother ask." And so, from Cana's feast to the end of time, through all lands and by all peoples and tongues, she is invoked with loving confidence, because the King cannot turn away her face, because He can deny her nothing.

Of Mary's birth the Gospels say nothing; but tradition tells us that her mother was Anne, her father Joachim, and that she was born in Jerusalem in a little rock-built house, near Mount Sion. When she was three years old she was taken by her parents to the Temple to offer herself to God.

Think of that infant child on her way to the House of God, clasping her father's fingers, her tiny feet hastening bravely over the rough stones, her little figure clothed in the glistening robe of dedication, her cheeks aglow with the fervour of her love for God. She was no mere child. The sights of the world were familiar to her, the angels were her companions, and her thoughts were heavenly. She was serious and yet so playful, so holy and yet so loveable. We think that goodness makes people disagreeable, but it is not the goodness that is disagreeable, it is the falling short of goodness. A saint perfect in this world would be perfectly loveable, but even the saint falls short of perfection. Mary at every age was as perfect as a creature can be and so was perfectly loveable.

What joy there must have been in Heaven when that little soul offered itself to God. She was the first of God's children that had not disappointed Him, the first to give back all she had received, the only one that answered His infinite love by the whole love of her sinless heart.

The years spent in the Temple were happy years for Mary. It was a delight to her to learn how to make and mend for the Sanctuary and for the poor, to follow the instructions in

the Law and the Prophets given by the Rabbis to her older companions. For Mary was not the only child in the Temple. It was a Jewish custom to bring up young girls there until they were fourteen, that is of a marriageable age—very young it seems to us, but that is the usual age in Eastern nations even now. So Mary remained in her Temple-home until she was fourteen, peacefully waiting for God to make known His will to her. Then her guardians found one to whom they could confide her. This man, chosen to be Mary's companion from all eternity, must have been gifted with every grace that could fit him for such a dignity. His was the office of an angel rather than that of a man, of a priest rather than of a foster-father, for he was to guard Mary the Immaculate and hold in his arms the Infant God.

Holy Scripture tells us that "Joseph, Son of David" was "a just man." This seems little praise to us, but in Scripture the word *just* means possessed of every virtue in an extraordinary degree, and when it is said of one called to an office such as no other ever held on earth, we may be sure it means a very high state of perfection indeed.

After the espousals Mary and Joseph left Jerusalem and went to live in what was

probably Mary's own little house at Nazareth. There was to be accomplished the greatest of mysteries—THE INCARNATION OF THE SON OF GOD.

V.

THE ROYAL AMBASSADOR.

“Behold I send My Angel before My Face.”—MARK i.

JERUSALEM, at the hour of incense. In the Jewish Temple the multitudes were assembled for prayer. The great outer court of the Gentiles and the inner court of the Israelites were full of worshippers, waiting for the priest to come and offer up the evening sacrifice.

There he is, toiling up the marble steps ; his pace is slow, for he is old and infirm. What a sad face he has ! Would you like to know what makes him look so sad ? The Jewish people of his day used to think it a disgrace when parents had no children, for the promised Redeemer could not be of their family. Zachary and Elizabeth had prayed all through their lives for a son, but God had left them childless in their old age. Now they have bent their will to the will of God and have given up all hope of having a little one of their own. But God does not mean to leave their prayer unheard. This, very day he has a surprise in store.

Zachary has reached the vestibule at last. There he is presented with incense in a golden cup. With it he passes through the folding doors and is lost to sight. It is a solemn moment. There is not a sound to be heard. The prayers of the throng outside are united with his. Standing alone before the altar, in the name of the whole Jewish people, he raises the cup and pours the incense slowly over the flames. A thick smoke rises into the air and fills the holy place with an odour of sweetness. The sacrifice is complete, all is over, and he retires walking backwards, his eyes fixed on the cloud.

Suddenly an angel appears on the right side of the altar. Zachary is struck motionless with fear. Who can this be? The angel seeing his trouble, calls him by his name: "Fear not Zachary, for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife, Elizabeth, shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John; and thou shalt have joy and gladness, and many shall rejoice in his birth."

When God gives, He gives generously, gives like a great sovereign. This son, so longed for, is to be one of the greatest amongst the sons of men. He is to be, not indeed the Messiah, but the precursor or forerunner of the Messiah. He is to be full of the Holy Ghost, "to convert many of the children of

Israel," and "to *prepare a perfect people* to the Lord their God."

But the message sounds strange to Zachary. What is he to think of it? Is it possible that God can give him a son now, when he is so old? He must ask for a sign. God's messenger must prove that his words are true. He says : "Whereby shall I know this? for I am an old man ; and my wife is advanced in years.' The angel answers him with great majesty :

"I am Gabriel, who stand before God and I am sent to speak to thee and to bring thee these good tidings." Zachary was ashamed. He had doubted the word of Gabriel, the archangel, before whom the great prophet Daniel had fallen on his face trembling. Gladly enough would he believe now without a sign, but the angel says :

"Behold thou shalt be dumb and shall not be able to speak until the day wherein these things shall come to pass ; because thou hast not believed my words which shall be fulfilled in their time." Then Zachary's lips were closed, his ears stopped up. He left the sanctuary a deaf-mute.

When his week's service in the Temple was over Zachary went home to Karim to his wife Elizabeth. How glad she was to see him ! But what had happened ? He could not hear,

he could not speak. Taking from her hand a waxed tablet he wrote down all that had taken place in the Temple. He wrote of God's promise of a son who was to be called John, who was to be great before the Lord; of the joy and gladness they were to have with him; of the great work he was to do for the Messiah whose coming was near at hand; whose herald the child was to be.

Elizabeth looked over Zachary's shoulder, and with tears of joy running down her wrinkled cheeks read what he wrote. She was to be the mother of him who was called by the prophets *the Angel of the Lord*, the long looked-for ambassador, that other Elias, mighty in spirit and power. How she thanked God for the honour done to her! How unworthy she felt of the dignity!

Quietly, all by herself in her little room, Elizabeth spent her time with God, meditating on His word in the Law and the Prophets. In them she read of the Virgin Mother whose Son was to be the great God of Heaven and earth, and she longed to know and serve her and show her reverent love. God is gracious. He knew of Elizabeth's wish, and He sent to tell her, the humble old saint of Karim, what He hid from all the world outside—Mary of Nazareth, the Child of the Temple, her own cousin, was to be the Mother of the Messiah.

VI.

THE HANDMAID OF THE LORD.

"Hail, full of grace!"

HAVE you noticed how quietly God does great things in this world? He makes His sun to rise without any noise, the moon to pass through the heavens without a sound, the stars to take their places one by one in the sky, and they are so quiet about it.

So when the *fulness of time* came and the only begotten Son of God was made Man, the mystery was accomplished noiselessly, when the world was at peace, in the silence of the night. One message was sent from heaven to earth—only one, and that not to the Roman Emperor, Augustus Cæsar, nor to Herod, the Idumean King of Palestine, but to Mary, the Virgin of Nazareth.

The Incarnation, which was Mary's secret then, belongs to all of us now, and we may listen to the angel's words as she listened, and try to keep them in our hearts as she kept them in hers.

A few months after the archangel Gabriel

had brought his message to Zachary in the Temple, he was sent by God on a far grander errand to the little town of Nazareth. St. Jerome says: "Let us go to Nazareth and we shall see the Flower of Galilee." The saint meant the town, for the word Nazareth means a flower, but we are going to see Mary, who is the real Flower of Galilee, one that Galilee might well have been proud to own. For Mary was very beautiful. Just think what she must have been like! Think of the loveliest face you have ever seen in pictures or in life, then think of that same face lit up by your own mother's smile. But it is no use trying to make pictures of Mary: we cannot imagine anything to come up to the Mother of God. Her immaculate soul shone in her countenance and made it beautiful with a heavenly beauty. But it was the heavenly beauty of her soul that attracted the Son of God.

When Noe let the dove out of the ark it returned to him immediately, for there was not a clean spot on which to rest its dainty little feet. But the Saviour of the world found *one* spot and only one. "My perfect one is but one." The beautiful story of His coming we know, but let us go back to that wonderful night and try to see and hear again all that happened in Mary's little room.

We must get there before the angel, for we

want to see round the house where God is going to lodge His Divine Son. It is the last in the steep street, at the bottom of the hill—there to our left. That door opens straight into a small room, Mary's own room, where the angel will find her at prayer. High up in the wall there is one window; on the opposite side is the hearth; a shelf of cedar-wood is fixed in the wall on one side. A door facing the street door leads into a natural cave, that is St. Joseph's room. From here we climb up some steps hewn roughly out of the rock, and find ourselves in a small space called the "Virgin's kitchen." Those two little cave-rooms have each a separate door leading into the hillside. And these small apartments are all the house contains. Not very spacious for the Son of God, is it? but God is not attracted by space. Mary lives here and that is attraction enough for Him.

It is midnight. All Nazareth is asleep. The room is dark and Mary is alone and at prayer. Her eyes are closed and her hands joined. The archangel Gabriel enters and comes towards her with great reverence. "Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women." He has come straight from his bright home in heaven, from the glorious vision of God. Yet when he sees Mary's soul, its beauty takes him by surprise. "Hail, *full* of grace."

Mary is troubled because she is praised. She thinks so little of herself that she is quite astonished that anyone can think highly of her. Angels cannot bear to see us in trouble, so Gabriel made haste to explain. "Fear not, Mary," he said, "for thou hast found grace with God . . . Behold, thou shalt bring forth a Son and thou shalt call His name Jesus. He shall be great and shall be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of David, His father, and He shall reign in the house of Jacob for ever and of His Kingdom there shall be no end."

There is a pause. God is waiting for Mary's answer. The heavenly court is listening to catch the sound. It comes from Mary's lips in one humble word : *Behold the handmaid of the Lord ; may it be done unto me according to thy word.* Gabriel returns with Mary's answer. It is repeated in heaven, and the angels bow down in adoration as the Eternal Son passes by, as the *Word is made Flesh.*

Think of the joy of Mary's heart when the angel left her. A child-saint died of joy whilst making her thanksgiving after her first Communion. Our Lady's joy was like that of the little child, only infinitely more intense. But Mary did not die ; she was too strong of soul ; besides, it was by living and suffering for her

Divine Son that she was to show herself His handmaid. She knew the prophecies, she knew the cruel sufferings that were to be the lot of the Redeemer, and she prepared her soul to share His sorrows and His shame.

Is there any song you like very much? One that you heard perhaps when you were very happy, and which brings back to your mind each time you hear it all the joy felt the first time. There is a prayer that sounds like a song in Mary's ear, one that reminds her of the joy of that blessed midnight hour when she became the Mother of God. It is the Angelus. Let us say it then with such love and reverence that Mary in Heaven may catch the sound and be stirred again with the joy of that wonderful night.

KARIM.

Before the archangel Gabriel left our Lady he told her that her cousin Elizabeth had also been promised a son. Mary's first thought was of congratulation. She would go to Elizabeth and wish her joy. The way was long and tedious, but an act of charity was worth any amount of trouble to Mary. So she "went into the hill country with haste into a city of Juda." It was spring-time and Galilee looked

lovely. Bright anemones, gaudy tulips, golden ranunculus and spotless white narcissus decked the meadows, the birds sang in the trees, and Mary's heart sang praise to God. No one heard, perhaps no one noticed her as she hurriedly journeyed onwards, yet wherever she went she left a blessing behind.

Karim, where Zachary lived, is a little town west of Jerusalem. It is a rugged spot on the spur of a mountain, and Mary had to climb many a steep bit of ground to get to it. She passed through sloping vineyards where the vine grows luxuriantly, through a fertile valley and through fields of olive and fig. At last, tired and out of breath, she saw before her the village on its lofty perch. Following a mule path up the mountain, she entered the gates and saluted with a kind sweet smile the rough inhabitants. She was well known to them, for she had often visited Elizabeth when as a little child she lived in the Temple. All loved Mary—her beautiful face and gracious ways had won their hearts from the first, and they were pleased to see her again.

In a few minutes she stood in front of Zachary's house. The door was open and she passed through the porch into the inner room. Elizabeth was there and before she could speak Mary put her hands upon her shoulder and greeted her lovingly. The dear

old saint was taken completely by surprise ; no news of Mary's coming had gone before. But as soon as her salutations sounded in Elizabeth's ear she cried out with a loud voice : " Blessed art thou among women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb."

We know who told Elizabeth Mary's secret. Not Mary—she had kept silence about it even to St. Joseph—but the Holy Ghost. He had inspired Elizabeth with the knowledge of the mystery—that she was Mother of God. No wonder Elizabeth added from the depths of her humble heart : " Whence is this to me that the Mother of my Lord come unto me?"

Mary did not answer Elizabeth's question. Her heart was full. Since the angel's visit she had been as silent as a harp unplayed upon, but Elizabeth's words struck a chord in her soul and Mary answers with a hymn of praise :

" My soul doth magnify the Lord : and my spirit hath rejoiced in God, my Saviour. Because He hath regarded the humility of His hand-maid : for behold from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed. Because He that is mighty hath done great things to me : and holy is His name. And His mercy is from generation unto generations, to them that fear Him. He hath shewed might in His arm ; He hath scattered the proud in the conceit of their heart. He hath put down the

mighty from their seat, and hath exalted the humble. He hath filled the hungry with good things : and the rich He hath sent empty away. He hath received Israel His servant, being mindful of His mercy. As He spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his seed for ever."

Do you know the Magnificat ? If you do not, learn it. Say it often. Try to understand it. Mary's words are few, but very precious. The Church treasures them in her office and bids her children repeat them every day. This canticle is a transport of joy. Perhaps you do not think so ; perhaps the words are hard for you to understand, the order of thoughts is difficult to follow. Let us go over it together and see if we can make it easier.

Mary first praises and glorifies God because He has done great things for her who was so lowly ; praises and glorifies Him too because she foresees that all generations will call her blessed.

Does this seem proud to you ? You know the saints saw so clearly that all the good in them was God's work, that they felt no more proud of their virtue than you do of the sun shining through your windows.

Then Mary thinks of God's goodness to all mankind ; not to her alone, she says, has He been merciful, but to every human being since

man was created. He has put down the proud, it is true, but only because they were proud; and the rich He has sent away empty, but only the avaricious rich. The humble He raises up, and those who long for Him He fills with His love.

Lastly, in two short sentences, Mary declares that God has fulfilled the promises, that He has kept His word to His people and has at last sent the Redeemer to Abraham's children.

Great thoughts are always simple, and Mary's great thoughts are simple too; but it takes a great deal of meditation to get out of them all the good they contain. Yet with study and, better still, with prayer, it can be done, and they are well worth all the trouble and pains we can give them.

Three months Mary lived in Zachary's house. It must have been a happy time for all who lived there. Zachary was deaf and dumb; he could neither hear her voice nor speak to her, but Mary tried to make it up to him for his loss by kind little attentions. Elizabeth, old and weakly, looked to Mary for help, the servants watched her movements and learnt from her to be charitable and obedient. We call Mary "Cause of our joy"—she was a very fountain of joy. How she would pour it out upon others. What a sunbeam she would be. But the three months came to an end and Mary "returned to her own house."

VII.

THE BIRTH OF THE KING.

“The Lord is little and greatly to be loved.”

“IN the year from the creation of the world,
. . . . five thousand one hundred and
ninety-nine: from the flood of Noe, two
thousand nine hundred and fifty-seven: from
the nativity of Abraham, two thousand and
fifteen: from Moses and the coming forth of
the people of Israel out of Egypt, one thousand
five hundred and ten: from the anointing of
David, King, one thousand and thirty-two:
in the sixty-five week according to the prophecy
of Daniel: in the year from the building of the
city of Rome, seven hundred and fifty-two:
in the two-and-fortieth year of the empire of
Octavian Augustus, when the world was in
peace, in the sixth age thereof, Jesus Christ,
Eternal God, and Son of the Eternal Father,
intending to sanctify the world with His most
blessed Presence . . . is made Man, born
in Bethlehem, Judea, of the Virgin Mary.
The Nativity of our Lord Jesus Christ,”* this

* Roman Martyrology.

is the mystery we are going to think about now.

Augustus Cæsar, Emperor of Rome, issued an edict in which he ordered the "whole world" to be enrolled. To be enrolled in those days meant to have your name and the amount of your property inscribed on a scroll in the town in which you lived. These scrolls were collected and sent up to head-quarters, where they were copied and carefully kept.

Augustus was proud of his power and he determined to show future ages how great was the empire over which he ruled. So the whole Roman world was set in motion to obey his orders. Even states only subject to Rome were included in the decree and officers went into every province to carry out the imperial orders. For years the census-taking lasted. As the scrolls filled up with names and dates reached Rome, Augustus with his own hand copied them into a register which was to prove to posterity how great and powerful a Cæsar he had been.

Yes, the Roman Emperor was great and powerful, but there was a greater than he for Whom, unknown to himself, he was working. God was Cæsar's Master and He made use of Cæsar's decisions to serve His own ends.

Now Palestine, where our Lady lived, was a

Roman province, but the Jews were troublesome subjects and Augustus had learnt to treat them prudently. They must be enrolled, he said, but they might follow their own custom, and it was this privileged enrolment that brought about the fulfilment of the prophecy that the Messiah should be born in Bethlehem.

According to Jewish Law, heads of households had to go to the towns to which the families belonged and then write down their names on the large parchment rolls kept for the purpose.

An officer from Rome brought the decree to Cyrinus, governor of Syria. He sent commissioners into every town and village of Palestine with the Emperor's orders. When these were received at Nazareth, there was much excitement amongst the villagers. People stood in groups in the street discussing the news. Anything from Rome was hateful to the Jews. They were a conquered nation and could not bear to feel the stranger's yoke. But there was no help for it; they said, the Emperor must be obeyed, and after all he had allowed them to be enrolled according to their own fashion, which was more than might have been expected.

Mary in her little home in Nazareth was waiting for a message from God. The Messiah was to be born in Bethlehem. When were

they to go there? The decree from Rome was the answer. Mary and Joseph were of the Royal House. Bethlehem was King David's city; to Bethlehem therefore they must go to be enrolled. A caravan was preparing to start for the south, and as that was their route, they got ready to start immediately.

Mary and Joseph take a last look at the little rooms, for they do not intend to return to Nazareth. They will stay in Bethlehem, the King's own city, they think. St. Joseph draws the wooden bolt, and makes the cottage safe. Then he helps Mary to mount the ass and they set out on their toilsome journey.

It is December. The roads are heavy; the winds bleak and cold; the trees are bare. Even beautiful Galilee looks desolate as they pass through its valleys. Yet Mary is so happy. She and Joseph speak little, but they understand each other perfectly. Both are full of joy. Do not forget their joy. We must take part in all they feel; take part in their joy particularly, for they do so like to share it with us. We want joy now, we shall want it more when we grow older, so let us get it from the Holy Family and it will be pure and holy.

On they go for three days, following the beaten track with the caravan, as long as it is light; and at night resting in the khans or inns. As the fourth day dawns the road turns, and

they come upon a lovely scene. A fertile valley dotted with groups of pomegranates and fig-trees, almonds and olives stretches far away to the north. To the east rises a hill which forms a sort of amphitheatre on whose green slippery sides a little city is built. All around lie well-cultivated vineyards, surrounded by stone walls and guarded by central towers. That little city is Bethlehem, David's old home. Its inhabitants are eagerly watching for the caravan, for it contains many of their friends and relations. As the foot of the hill is reached by the travellers, little children, bright-eyed and intelligent, sent up a shout of joyous greeting. Men and women in holiday dress salute the expected visitors with a kind word and a kiss of welcome. The caravan pushes onwards and the khan is reached.

A khan is a large open square enclosed by a wall, around which covered galleries are built. In these, travellers spread their beds, or rather mats, do their cooking, and, if possible, make themselves comfortable. Outside, in the courtyard, the mules, camels, and horses are unloaded, watered and fed; the baggage is stored up in heaps and given into the charge of some individual whose business it is to see to its safety.

Joseph and Mary are the last in the long file, and they patiently wait their turn to enter the common lodging. No one in Bethlehem

was expecting *them*, no kind hand was stretched out to them in friendship, no house opened its doors to let them in. And even in this common lodging no place can be found; "*there was no room for them in the inn.*" As it is, the building is overcrowded they are told. St. Joseph looks around. What a scene of confusion. Every man is intent upon his own affairs. "Business is business all the world over, and self comes first and nobody second. No time this for acts of charity. Night is coming on apace and much remains to be done." St. Joseph turns to go. Meeting Mary at the door, he shows by his face how disappointed he is. She looks down at him, and her smile is so bright that his trouble vanishes. Without a word he takes her bridle and leads the way to seek shelter outside.

Twilight is short in the east. It is almost dark when Mary and Joseph grope their way to one of the many caves of that hilly district and darker still within. They enter; the cave is oblong and cut out of the soft limestone rock; the air thick and damp and very cold; a piercing wind sweeps into the gloomy recess. By the light of the lantern they see an ox standing by the manger; St. Joseph puts up his own ass by its side. There is plenty of straw for the two gentle animals; later they will share it with the Holy Child.

Midnight approaches. There is a hush. Nothing is heard but the deep breathing of the ox. Mary and Joseph are at prayer. Midnight, God's hour has come, and the "WORD . . . MADE FLESH, DWELLS AMONGST US." Mary holds in her arms her Infant God, the Redeemer of the world, the Messiah of the Promise. She looks into His face and almost sees His Divinity. He stretches out His little arms towards her and she lays her lips against His cheek. "Mother dear, let us share thy joy, thy adoration, thy love. Joseph unites his love with thine. Oh, take ours Mother, and offer it with thine to our new-born Saviour!"

Shall we ever know what passed between those two—God made man and His Blessed Mother? Never. It is Mary's secret, there is no other heart large enough to understand it.

Very gently she wraps the swathing-bands round His infant limbs. She raises Him in her arms and carries Him to the crib. See, her tears are falling now—His crib is the manger!

Have you ever put your hand into a bird's nest and felt the soft warm lining? Its sides are stuffed with down, and moss, and cotton-wool, for the mother-bird knows how tender little fledglings are.

Look at the holy crib—it is made of clay and lined with straw. Put your hand in and feel

how rough it is. Here Mary lays her tender little one. Her own arms are warm, her lap is soft, but it is God's will that He should lie on the straw in the manger. The ox and the ass stand near, and with their hot sweet breath warm their God. Mary and Joseph kneel close up to the crib in adoration.

“Glory be to God in the highest.”

And now Almighty God looks down upon the earth to find adorers for His Son, for He is “King of Kings and Lord of Lords.” He is come unto His own and must have courtiers to surround Him. Before Him lies the whole world. Where will His choice rest? There are the great ones of this world—Augustus of Rome and Herod of Judea; there are the wise of this world—the counsellors of kings and the learned scribes and chief priests. None of these has God chosen. Come away from the town and cities. Leave them to their pride and their luxury; come on to the green slopes of Palestine. Look out into the night until your eyes are accustomed to the dim light of the stars. Do you see those tall gaunt forms on the hillside, men clothed with sheepskins, with dark coverings on their heads and sandalled feet? Those are the shepherds of Bethlehem keeping their night-watches over their masters' flocks; they are of the lowest

class of the people : rough, uncultured men. But they are God's choice. They shall come and adore, for their hearts are pure and holy—they are ready to receive their Messiah.

See ! they are surrounded by a bright light—it shines round about them—they stand in the very midst of its brightness—it is as if heaven had come down upon earth. Yet a great fear seizes upon the shepherds. They stand speechless, shading their eyes with their hands. Suddenly an angel of the Lord stands by their side and says to them : “ Fear not : for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, that shall be to all the people : For this day is born to you a Saviour, Who is Christ the Lord, in the city of David. And this shall be a sign to you : You shall find the Infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger.”

Then “ a multitude of the heavenly army ’ appears in the heavens, and then rises up from their ranks a hymn of praise such as was never heard on earth before : “ Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men of good will.” No wonder there was a *multitude* of angels. The whole heavenly host must have been there, for how could one of those loyal spirits have been away when honour was to be paid to God—God humbled to the form of a little child !

The shepherds sink upon their knees and their hearts throb with joy as they listen to the

words of the angels. How long the vision lasts they do not know, but gradually the brightness fades away and the song of the angels ceases. Turning to one another they say : " Let us go over to Bethlehem and let us see this word that is come to pass which the Lord hath shewed to us." With their staves in their hands they go " with haste" over the hills, and as they go they repeat the words of the angels' song in a very jubilee of joy. " Glory be to God in the highest." Glory be to God, they say, and their hearts overflow with gratitude that the great Messiah has sent for them poor outcasts. Does He lie in a manger ? —then their coarse garments will not be out of place. Is He in want, then they can share their poverty with Him, and poverty shared with Him will be wealth enough for them.

Very soon they reach the stable and they enter softly. No brightness, no glory, no angels are seen in the cave. When the sun shines the stars are not seen—they are covered up by too much light. A glimmer from the lantern falls on the face of the Child-God. The shepherds fall on their knees. No angelic choirs sing now, for angels are silent when God speaks, and God is speaking to those lowly humble hearts. Look at those rough men as they kneel in prayer. Their horny hands are clasped, their eyes are fixed, their lips scarcely

move. Mary has drawn them very near to her and with her and St. Joseph they pour out the love of their hearts.

As the sun rises in the heavens the shepherds make ready to go; but before leaving they tell our Lady all about their wonderful vision. We do not know what Mary said to them, but we know she kept all their words in her heart and pondered them. We shall not hear our Mother speak again for twelve years. Still, one thing we know she is doing, she is keeping those words in her heart.

Like apostles, the shepherds spread the good news of the wonderful Birth amongst their townsfolk and acquaintance. "And all that heard wondered." Poor folk of Bethlehem! It is not a very useful thing to wonder only, and they seem to have done nothing more. "He came unto His own and His own received Him not," St. John says. His own were the people of Bethlehem and they sent Him to the cave. We should like to think that they made up to Him later for their first neglect, but we are not told that they ever got to know and love Him.

JESUS.

For a week our Blessed Lord was a little nameless babe. But on the eighth day He was circumcised and received His holy name.

That day He shed His Blood for the first time, and for the first time He was called "Jesus."

It was very loving of our Lord to take the name of Jesus. It means Saviour, and it must have encouraged many a sad and sorrowful heart in His time to come and ask favours of Him. Many who lived in His day did not know Him as the Saviour of the world, but they got to know Him as One Who "had compassion on the multitude," Who was tender to all who were suffering, Who was kind even to the sinful. So they used to cry to Him, "*Jesus*, Son of God, have mercy on us," and His name became sweet to their ear.

The name of Jesus was common among the Jews, but all who bore it were not deliverers of their people. One man there was who did great things for the Israelites; he led them to the conquest of the promised land and gained many grand victories for them. He was called Josue or Jesus—he had a right to the name. Yet how different was he from our Saviour. He conquered the enemies of his own time, only, and only of his own little nation. Our Jesus, this little Saviour, will subdue the enemy *of all mankind* and *for all time*. He will leave us a beaten foe to fight.

Look at that dog there; its master caught it stealing and chastised it well. See how it skulks along by the wall, its tail between its legs, its ears

hanging limp, and its head bent down. Nobody would be afraid of such a thing as that; all the spirit has been taken out of it. That is the sort of enemy we have to meet—a whipped hound—only our enemy is chained as well as beaten. He can hurt no one against his will.

Come and see this little Saviour of ours, come and see Him Who is going to save us from our sins. Like the shepherds, we shall find Him “with Mary, His Mother.” He is in this little house. Raise the bolt reverently, for God is within. Now kneel by Mary’s knee and adore. He is very small, yet his baby-heart beats with infinite love. His tiny hands are infinite in their power. He will grow bigger, but He cannot grow more loving. He will grow stronger, but not more powerful. He is the all perfect God, though only an Infant Child. Kiss those hands before they are pierced, kiss those little feet before they are wounded. Call Him by His name and tell Him yours. Ask Him to write your name on His heart, and on yours to write His sacred, His most holy name “*Jesus*.”

Later, when this little child is grown up, He will give us everything He possesses. He will give us His name even, for there is power in it. He will say to us: “When you ask My Father anything, ask it in *My name*, and I promise you that it shall be given to you.” And we do as He says—we ask in His name. At the end of all

our prayers, for ourselves and others, for this world and the next, we always end with: "through Jesus Christ, our Lord," like a child that asks a favour and adds: "Father says I may have it."

VIII.

THE LORD OF THE TEMPLE.

“Blessed art Thou in the Holy Temple of Thy glory.”

—DAN. iii.

Look up at the sky! What a glorious burst of sunshine! No beams, but one great maze of light. It is as if the sun were trying to make a halo worthy of God Himself. But see—there comes a cloud, heavy and dull. It is sailing this way. Will it put out the glorious sunshine? Will it darken that beautiful light? Let us watch. On, on it comes, now it is passing through the very midst of the blaze. Oh, how beautiful! The cloud itself is changed into light; it does not dim the brightness, for every drop of its watery substance breaks up the white light and reflects it in many colours. The cloud has softened the brilliant beauty of the sunshine and made it easier for our eyes to bear.

In the life of our Lady there are joys like sunshine and sorrows like clouds. They are seldom far apart; sometimes even they are together in her soul like that cloud in the sun.

To-day in the Temple at Jerusalem sorrow will come to Mary ; let us go there, too, that we may share it with her. We will take up our stand in the Court of the Women, between those two marble pillars—there we shall be almost opposite the Nicanor Gate where the ceremony of the presentation takes place.

What a busy scene and what a lot of little children ! They are the eldest of their families, and belong to God by right. Their parents are going to present them to Him to-day and will then buy them back with five shekels of silver. These little ones were all born on Christmas-day—our Lord's own birthday. And some, like Him, are from Bethlehem. Happy little children ! Their names, we know, are written over martyr-thrones in Heaven.

Do you hear the soft cooing of the pigeons and the weak bleating of the lambs ? They are the mothers' offering. The rich bring the lambs, the poor two pigeons or turtle-doves.

The priest is standing on the marble steps waiting to begin the ceremony ; one by one the children are given to him ; he receives them into his arms, and offers them to God ; then the money is paid and the little ones are carried away.

Turn your head westward towards the Beautiful Gate. The Lord of the Temple is very near now--see, there He comes. Mary

enters, bearing in her arms the Divine Child ; St. Joseph follows ; he carries the doves in a little wicker cage and loose in one hand the five silver pieces, the earnings of the past six weeks. How recollected Mary is ! her eyes are fixed on the Face of Jesus and he looks back at her. They read each other's thoughts—a great prophecy is being fulfilled : “The Desired of all nations shall come and fill this House with glory.”

“Where is the glory ? We only see a poor man, and a beautiful mother, and a little child. There is nothing glorious in that !”

Do you not think so ? Can the prophecy be wrongly worded then ? We know this cannot be. But the prophet spoke with the language of Heaven, and we, who do not think with the thoughts of Heaven, find his words hard to understand. Glory with him does not mean brilliant sunshine nor the splendour of kings. It means grace, holiness : Joseph is a just man, Mary is full of grace, our Blessed Lord is God Himself, the author of all grace. He is entering into the House built for Him and by “His Presence glorifies the place of His Feet.” And so Aggeus' prophecy is fulfilled when Mary carries into the Temple her Divine Son, the “King of Eternal Glory.”

Now it is Mary's turn to go up the marble steps. This is one of the most solemn moments

of her life, as solemn for her as the Elevation at Mass is for the priest. She is going to offer God to God! Jesus, with His little Human Heart offers Himself to His Heavenly Father, a type of the Sacrifice of Himself upon our altars. Let us bow our heads and say with Him lovingly: "My Jesus, I desire to unite myself so closely to Thee, that Thou canst not be offered up to God without me."

One moment and all is over. No bell was rung, no head bowed low, yet a great offering was made that morning. Mary takes Jesus back into her arms; He is hers again for nearly thirty years.

Watch the Holy Family threading their way through the groups of women. Happy mothers to be so near the Virgin-Mother; they smile at her as she passes them by and she greets them kindly in return.

But who is that venerable old man with white hair who stands before her? Mary knows him. It is Simeon, who all through his life has waited for the "Christ of the Lord." These two understand each other well, he belongs, like aged Anna there, to those holy Jews, who look for the "Redemption of Israel."

Very lovingly Mary places the Infant Saviour into the old man's trembling arms and he raises his beaming face to heaven and blesses God in a canticle of joy. Willingly will he die now,

he says, for his eyes have seen the promised Redeemer—seen Him Who is to be a Light to the Gentiles and the glory of the people of Israel. Then he reverently lays down the Holy Child in His Mother's arms, and with a look of deep sorrow says to her: "Thy own soul a sword shall pierce." Mary understands. She is the mother of sorrows, the mother of Him Who will be the man of sorrows. How can her heart remain whole when His is pierced? She is "the handmaid of the Lord," be it done unto her according to His word. Here is the cloud in the sun—sorrow softening Mary's joy. The shadow of Calvary has fallen upon all the joy of her life. What a strong heart she must have had to bear in it at the same time such joy and such sorrow!

The Holy Family leave the Temple, for they have performed all things "according to the law of the Lord." St. Joseph leads the way to the Beautiful Gate. Anna, the prophetess, stands looking after them until her weak eyes can see them no longer. Then she seeks out her friends to tell them with great joy of the wonderful event that has just taken place.

IX.

THE KING AMONG KINGS.

“Thy King is a Child.”

SCOTTISH chieftains in olden times used to light beacon fires on the hilltops to summon their clansmen. As the flames shot up in the dark night from the surrounding heights the news spread over the country like wildfire, and the men started from their heather beds to answer the call.

Our little new-born King has his beacon fire also—not on the mountain-tops, where only a few can see it, but high in the heavens, where it can be seen by all. His beacon light is a bright star, for He is Creator as well as King, and He sets it up as a sign to His subjects in far distant lands.

It is a sign they have waited long to see. Centuries ago Balaam, the soothsayer, foretold that *a star would arise in Jacob, and a sceptre in Israel*, and the word was handed down from father to son. Little ones learnt about the prophecy at their mother's knee, and as they grew older they used to point to the sky and

ask whether this or that beautiful star were Jacob's, and when they were told it had not yet appeared, they turned away disappointed.

One bright December night, on the Persian plains, news spreads from tent to tent that a strange star has arisen. Crowds gather together to see it. "It is Jacob's star," they say; "the great King must be born." Its movements are watched by the learned at night; the simple folk look wonderingly at it as they draw together the curtains of their tents, and the little ones kiss their hands to it before they lie down to rest.

Amongst the throng are three sheiks, or chiefs. They are called "wise men," because they know many things—the names and places of the stars in the heavens, and many other mysteries of the skies. But, far better than all human knowledge, they know the true God, and love and serve Him with their whole hearts. They, too, see the star, and to them it is a sign that speaks straight to their generous natures.

"If the great King is born," they say, "we must go and adore Him; we are His subjects, and we must see what He wants us to do."

So they tell their counsellors and friends that they are going on a long journey to seek the new-born King; that they will leave all their possessions in the hands of their friends until

they return—or perhaps they may never return at all, for the King may want them. With great haste they make their preparations, call together some trusty servants, load the camels with the necessary baggage, and start for the unknown land.

Out into the open plains they ride, firm in their resolution, peaceful and happy. Their friends and neighbours think them mad. They see the mocking looks of the crowds that have gathered to watch them, the fingers pointed at them as they pass by, the jeers of the common people. But they have counted the cost, and nothing disturbs them now.

What a long distance they travelled! Along the banks of the Tigris, through the plains of Babylon, across the Euphrates, and over the waters of the Jordan. Then at last they found themselves in the land of Jacob, and they thanked God that He had led them safe.

Still the star goes on. Night and day it guides them, and they follow it as children follow their mother. At last they climb a mountain-side, and there, glittering in the distance, lifted upon its five hills, stands Jerusalem. The Magi rein in their camels, and look at it with awe. It is a beautiful sight, with its domes shining in the sun, its towers rising clear against the sky, its palaces glistening in the morning light. But they are too eager to delay long.

The great King will be in his capital—they must press on, for they have been months on the road.

Now they have reached the city gates, and the star disappears. For a moment they hesitate. What is God's will? Evidently they are to go into Jerusalem. So two by two the camels enter, the Wise Men first, servants and baggage following. Slowly and solemnly they proceed up the narrow, winding streets, looking anxiously to the right and left. Every-day life is going on; there are no signs of joy or festivity. Without dismounting, they ask the passers-by in clear, firm tones :

"Where is He that is born King of the Jews? We have seen His star in the East, and we have come to adore Him." They simply mean : "Where does your little new-born King live? Show us the way to His palace, for we have come from a distance to pay Him our homage." The people stand still and look up in blank astonishment. "What new-born King?" They know of none. The question flies from mouth to mouth, till at last it is carried to the palace, and Herod himself hears about the travellers. "He was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him." It does not take much to trouble a man with a bad conscience, and Herod's conscience was very bad. Look at him pacing his marble floor. Gems sparkle

in the latchet of his shoes, his robe is rich purple, drawn in by a waistband of gold, a narrow crown of delicate workmanship encircles his crimson tarbooshe; a dagger of wrought steel gleams by his side. He has sent away his courtiers, and he is alone. He is an old man; his face is wrinkled, his hair is grey; his eyes are dreadful to look at, and no wonder; he is a murderer; he has killed his nearest relations, massacred thousands of innocent people. Now he is planning to get rid of the new-born King. If there is one thing he dreads more than another it is loss of power, and this new-born stranger, he thinks, may come and take away his crown.

Little by little his pace gets slower; a satisfied look steals over his wicked face as he sinks on to a carved ottoman. He sends for the chief priests and scribes, and tells them to bring their scrolls with them. And then he sits thinking until they are announced.

With the most profound marks of respect, the scribes enter the gorgeous room, and silently take their seats. Herod asks them calmly where *this King* is to be born. They are courtiers, and make show of having to search for the prophecy, but they have looked it out long ago; even the common people know that Jacob's prophecy is fulfilled, that the sceptre has passed away from Juda, and that Herod is

the stranger who sits on the throne of David. At last they bring the roll to the King, with their finger on the passage in the prophecy of Micheas : " And thou, Bethlehem Ephrata, art a little one among the thousands of Juda ; out of thee shall He come forth unto Me that is to be the Ruler in Israel, and His going forth is from the beginning, from the days of eternity."

Still no sign of wrath on Herod's face. He bows his thanks, and dismisses them.

Now the Magi are summoned with the greatest secrecy. They are told to leave their retinue some distance from the palace, and to enter by a side door. Herod receives them graciously, inquires eagerly about the time of the star's appearance, hears their theory of its meaning, and at length begs them to go and find out in Bethlehem where the new-born King is living, and then to come back and tell him, adding : *That I also may come and adore Him.*

Herod is cunning as well as wicked. He is afraid of drawing attention to the Messiah's birth by finding out particulars for himself, so he leaves the Wise Men to make inquiries. " Of course, they will return and tell me all," he thinks. And so they certainly would if they had been left to themselves, but God was watching over them.

They leave Herod's palace, and soon fall in with their servants. The camels' heads are turned towards Bethlehem, and they set out intending to "inquire diligently," as the King had ordered. But God has one of His loving surprises for them. "Behold, the star which they had seen in the East went before them until it came and stood over where the Child was." They look at each other, too full to speak. How good God is! How good He is! "They rejoiced with exceeding great joy."

Down the Bethlehem road they go, straining their eyes to catch the first sight of the little town, and urging on their beasts, whose heavy hoofs raise the white dust at every footfall.

At last Bethlehem is reached. Their beautiful star shines brilliantly over a low-roofed house. The door is open, and they enter. The Child is with His Mother. They bow down their heads and adore Him. What magnificent faith! They do what Lucifer could not—they adore God-made Man, God in the form of a helpless Child.

Beautiful Babe of Bethlehem! Saints have described Thee, painters have painted Thee, yet we cannot think what Thou wert like! But we adore Thee without knowing, we love Thee without seeing. Give us the faith and love of those three wise men.

They open their treasures. Just look how

eagerly the dark-skinned slaves unlash the burdens from the camels' backs, roll them into the little house, and there undo them. Their black eyes sparkle as the gold shines out from the wrappings; the incense in strong boxes comes next, then the myrrh, so much prized by Eastern people. These rich gifts the Magi offer on their knees, with hearts burning with love; near them kneel their slaves, taking part in their love and adoration.

And what did our Lord do for the Magi in return? They had "opened their treasures" and given Him the very best gifts their native land produced. And He opens His treasures and gives them His choicest gifts. For their gold He gives them *love*, pure and strong; for their incense He gives them a *faith* that will never waver. But what for their myrrh? Can you guess? Perhaps not. *Suffering*. It is not much valued on earth, but it is greatly prized in heaven. Our Lord keeps it amongst His most precious treasures. He cannot give it to all, because some of us are like children and cannot be trusted with a thing of great value. If you give a baby a £10 note it will pull it to pieces as if it were an old envelope. If you put a pearl into its little hand the chances are ten to one that it will swallow it. The only prudent thing, therefore, is to do neither.

And we are babies, some of us, and remain babies all our lives ; so our Lord has to keep His best gift from us. But when He finds big-hearted people—people who have looked so long at Him that they have become like Him—He gives them this treasure, and He gave it to the three wise men. They are honoured all over the Church as *Martyrs*. What could even He, almighty as He is, have added to that? “Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends.” He gave them this *greater love* for Him that they might suffer for Him greatly.

Our Lord had expected His guests, and had arranged all for their visit. He arranged that they should find Him with His Mother, that so they might learn from Him how to love her, and learn from her how to love Him. She was mistress in the little house ; how lovingly she provided for all ! Their feet were washed, they were fed with her best, their camels were watered, the servants looked after. They are all so happy in Mary’s house and in the company of the Holy Family. And yet it all comes to an end, and they have to say good-bye. The wise men one by one kneel before our Lord, and He blesses them, laying a little hand on their heads in turn. Then they leave the Presence Chamber, remount, and turn towards Jerusalem.

X.

THE HOLY INNOCENTS.

“The First-fruits to God and to the Lamb.”

NEWS was brought to the palace that the Magi had gone home another way. Herod stared at the messenger. Had his plans been baffled? Had he been outwitted by three simple-looking strangers? *He was exceeding angry.*

A caged lion in a passion is a dreadful sight. It glares with blood-shot eyes, it stiffens its mane until it stands up almost erect, and it dashes itself from one side of the cage to the other. Now and again it utters so fearful a roar that it makes the ground tremble. Yet it is harmless, and can hurt no one but itself.

Herod was in a passion, but he was not caged, and with one stroke of his pen he did more harm than many lions let loose would have done.

This was the thought that made him angry—the Child-King lives in Bethlehem. If He grows up He will take my throne away from me. He must die, then, and hundreds with Him, if need be. So without deliberation, without counsel, he writes a decree that all the

little male children of two years and under in Bethlehem and the neighbourhood are to be killed.

It is night-time ; the soldiers have already left the Holy City, and are on their road to Bethlehem. The Holy Family are in the house where the Magi found them. Jesus has been laid to rest ; our Lady has taken her place beside Him. St. Joseph is asleep.

Suddenly a bright light falls upon his face. An angel is standing by his side. "Arise," says the angel, "and take the Child and His Mother, and fly into Egypt, and be there until I shall tell thee ; for it will come to pass that Herod will seek the Child to destroy Him."

Fly ? And at night ! How God trusts His saints. If St. Joseph *obeys promptly*, Jesus will be safe. Joseph does obey promptly. He arises, takes the Child and His Mother, and flies into Egypt.

The tramp of soldiers is heard on the Bethlehem road. The Roman ensign is borne aloft, the centurion rides in the rear, and keeps the soldiers at a steady pace.

Bethlehem is reached ; not a word has been uttered of the wicked plot—not a warning given. The soldiers are let loose upon the sleeping people. They unsheathe their swords, push open the doors of the houses, enter, and

begin their hideous task. The very house which has sheltered the Holy Family is ransacked, but too late, the Lamb of God is no longer there.

The soldiers do not like their work ; it is slaughter not war, but they have been taught obedience and they obey unquestioningly. No quarter is given, no bribes received, no lamentations—and oh, how Hebrew women can lament !—are heeded. Houses are searched, the caves that pierce the hillsides are explored, the brushwood where the jackals hide is beaten. Not a child escapes except Him Whose “hour is not yet come.”

“ But the poor babes of Bethlehem and their broken-hearted mothers ? ”

Poor babes ! Why poor ? Think now whether they are to be pitied at all. Their little King Himself looked after them. Did He give them such a wonderful grace that they understood the sacrifice He asked of them, and willingly laid down their lives for love of Him ? We do not know. There was a moment's pain, and then an eternal crown and a martyr's palm. Look up and see those little ones. They are *playing with their crowns and palms*, as though they were babies still in heaven.

Oh, happy little ones ! the summer sun rises early, the winter sun late—you were children of summer and got your light at an early hour,

and now you spend your long day praising God for His mercy to you.

But the mothers of the Innocents—we may indeed pity them. The Church pities them, for she also is a Mother. On the Feast of the Holy Innocents she clothes her priests in purple to show that the sorrows of her children are her sorrows too.

Do you remember that prophecy of a wicked deed to be committed at the birth of our Lord? “A voice in Rama was heard, lamentation and great mourning; Rachael would not be comforted, because they are not.” These are the mothers who will not be comforted, these are they who lament and mourn. They have no one to whom they can turn in their sorrow. Our Lady is not there to comfort them, Jesus has been taken out of their midst. Poor Mothers of Bethlehem! Our Christian mothers need never be like them,

“For in Mary’s ear all sorrow
Singeth ever like a psalm.”

and Jesus will never be in Egypt now when they come to Him for consolation. He longs to hear us pour out our sorrows.

“Oh Lord! Thou lovest we should speak,
Nor silent bear our pain:
The look of Thy forbearing love
Allures us to complain.”

And so we come to Him with our big and little troubles, and He hears and comforts us with His sympathy.

“OUT OF EGYPT HAVE I CALLED MY SON.”

This is the road that leads westward from Bethlehem. The Roman centurion has just led his soldiers through the northern gate, and they have begun the massacre in the little town. We are too far off to hear the mother's wail or the piteous cry of the little ones: But listen! There is a sound of footsteps—a quick crisp tread. Can it be that the soldiers are coming this way? The sound is too light for Roman feet. The travellers are in sight now. How fast they go! they must be in danger of their lives. See, it is a mother with her little one—a fugitive mother from Bethlehem. Let us look at her as she rides past, look at the child in her arms. Ah, we know Him—it is “He Who is born King of the Jews,” the Messiah of Promise. He is flying from Herod who seeks His life.

“And must this Infant-King Who is God, fly from Herod who is only a man? Can He not work a miracle to save Himself?”

He has worked many such miracles. About two hundred years ago a convent stood where it stands now in an old town of the North of

England. The times were evil. Catholics were persecuted and imprisoned, and their houses searched and plundered. Once an excited mob collected round the convent walls and threatened to pull the place down brick by brick unless a free entrance were given to the rioters. The Superior had one treasure—the Blessed Sacrament. Tremblingly she went to the chapel and took the pyx out of the Tabernacle, as she had leave to do in a case of such great distress. Crossing her hands on her breast, where she had hidden her treasure she said: “Save Thyself, Lord, for we cannot save Thee.” And our Lord did save Himself. He sent His Standard-bearer St. Michael to her help. High over the Convent walls the great Archangel appeared to the crowd. His dazzling splendour and great majesty struck the people with reverence and awe. The uproar died down, the angry voices ceased, and the rioters dispersed to their homes in silence. The convent-treasure was saved by a miracle.

Look now at the little One on Mary’s lap. Is it not as helpless and yet as powerful as the treasure that holy woman carried hidden in her breast? Will Jesus save Himself by a miracle to-night?

See the little hands clasp Mary’s, the meek eyes turn to St. Joseph for help. To-night e says: “You must save Me, I will not save

Myself." For He has come to do the Will of His Father, and it is His Father's Will that He should be saved by flight. This is why the Holy Family is on the road to Egypt in the darkness and cold.

Let us follow them. Our little King must not go into exile without us. Down the road they go, over the green hills of Judea. When the sun rises they are in meadow-lands, where the cattle graze and sweet flowers grow. Mary loves flowers, and Joseph stops a moment to gather some for her. See, she picks out the fairest of the bunch, and puts them into the little hand of their Creator. His eyes sparkle with pleasure, and He smiles lovingly into her face.

But the meadows are soon left behind, and the country becomes barren and desert. The sun is scorching overhead, and yet they dare not stop; night must fall again before they halt.

Mary looks at Joseph, and she sees that the hot sand has blistered his feet; she looks at Jesus and she sees the tears trickle down His cheeks. No wonder the flight into Egypt is one of Mary's dolours.

Three days pass—oh, such weary days, full of hunger and thirst and care. At last the Holy Family reaches the boundary line of Herod's Kingdom; they cross a little torrent

and find themselves on foreign soil, in Egypt, saved from Herod's cruelty.

After a little rest St. Joseph travels further inland into the heart of the Nile country. It is another long journey through a sandy desert. Under the beautiful sycamores of Heliopolis they halt a few days. Then on again until they come to the silvery Nile and to the old, old city of Memphis. And here St. Joseph settles. He hires a cottage in the poor part of the town and works as a carpenter. Mary does the household work. Here she makes the little seamless robe for Jesus, the inner robe that will grow with His growth, the one that He will never lay aside as long as He lives. It is white, the usual colour of the Jewish dress ; it will reach to the knees and be bound with a girdle round the waist. Soon Jesus will learn to walk, and the robe must be ready for Him then ; so Mary weaves with love in every thread.

As the months go by Jesus begins to speak. Think of him pronouncing the name of God ! Oh, if we could only have heard the child-lips of God-made Man say that one word "God." Saints have been rapt out of themselves when they have heard an angel speak. But Mary and Joseph hear the Son of God himself. Like Adam and Eve "they hear His glorious voice," but to Mary and Joseph He is nearer and dearer than He ever was to our first parents.

Why did the Holy Family travel so far into Egypt? Let us try and see why.

The Divine Child is playing on the sand in front of the cottage. His companions are dark-skinned Egyptians. They are the descendants of Cham, the race cursed by Noe. These are they for whom the little Saviour yearns, for He is the Saviour of the whole world. The sons of Japhet He will find in the Greek colonies of Galilee; Sem's sons are His own nation, but Cham's children He must seek after Himself. They are the lost sheep of His great fold, and so the little shepherd has come himself to seek them. How lovingly our Lord looks up at their swarthy faces, how sweetly He smiles upon them and how gently they play together. And when they part at night, Jesus puts His hand upon their heads and gives them a blessing that may be worth a baptism.

Not only children flock around the cottage door; the mothers also come to watch Mary at her work and Jesus at His play. At first they are shy and distant, but Mary's kindness draws them near. Little by little she opens their minds and softens their hearts, and they learn who God is and how much He has loved them—and the Infant Child does the rest.

Nowadays there are holy missionaries, and brave religious men and women, who leave their homes and go to Africa to teach Cham's

unfortunate race. They must be dear to the Heart of Jesus; they must have learnt to love the despised and the miserable from that loving Heart itself and He must bless them and their work with a double blessing.

One day, word is brought to the Jewish colonies that King Herod is dead. The news spreads like wild-fire and every Jewish heart rejoices. His was a hated name and rose with a curse to the lips of the fiery Israelites. He is gone and St. Joseph's exile is over—he may return to Israel, to the home of his fathers. But still he lingers. *Be there until I shall tell thee* were the angel's words and St. Joseph waits.

God did not keep him waiting long. In the middle of the night an angel came to him and said: "Arise, and take the Child and His Mother, and go into the land of Israel. For they are dead that sought the life of the Child."

"Out of Egypt have I called My Son," are the words of prophecy. God calls and St. Joseph obeys and brings God's Son out of Egypt. Across the Nile they travel and across the desert—over the Red Sea and into another wilderness. Then up into the hilly country of Judea and—St. Joseph thought—back to Bethlehem, David's Royal City. But on the way he hears that Archelaus is reigning in Judea, for Herod the Great's Kingdom, he finds, has been

divided between his three sons. Herod Philip as Tetrarch, rules a portion of the land beyond the Jordan ; Herod Antipas, Galilee and Perea ; and Archelaus, the Ethnarch, Judea, Samaria and Idumea. This Archelaus is known to St. Joseph as a wicked man and a cruel tyrant. It will never do to risk the Messiah's life by settling down in Judea. Again, St. Joseph's steps are guided by a message in his sleep. He is to return to Galilee, to Mary's little home at Nazareth. There under Herod Antipas his treasure will be safe.

XI.

NAZARETH.

“Thou art a Hidden God.”

LET us stand on this high hill and look around. Nazareth is down there at our feet. See how its green hills shut it out from the world beyond. The flat-roofed houses lie on the hillside and look as if they had been dropped down anywhere. Some stand in vineyards, some are surrounded by gardens, some by olive-yards. Others are built against the hollow rock like Mary's little home. That large house in the midst of the town is the synagogue where the people meet three times a day for prayer and three times a week for instruction. There to the East runs a stream that bubbles up into a fountain, Nazareth's only fountain. Beyond are cornfields waving in the breeze, further off clumps of fig-trees and oaks, and by the cottage doors grow orange and pomegranates. The meadows and hills are gay with wild flowers, white lilies, and rich red anemones, yellow asphodels and blue forget-me-nots. They grow as if they knew their little Lord was coming to

grow up amongst them and they must put on their best to give Him a joyous welcome.

One more turn in the road and the Holy Family are in sight of Nazareth. Mary's eyes brighten as they see the old familiar spot. The little white houses, the green sloping hills, the lovely flowers, even the rough inhabitants are dear to Mary. They stop her with a friendly welcome and congratulate her upon her beautiful Child. The villagers have a bad name in the neighbourhood. All the people of Galilee are looked down upon by the Jews of Judea, but the Galileans themselves despise the people of Nazareth. "Can anything good come from Nazareth," we shall hear one of them say later when Jesus is spoken of. Yet Jesus Himself has chosen poor despised Nazareth for His home and He will live in it for twenty-eight years and make Himself one with the uncouth inhabitants. So He will be called "Jesus of Nazareth." The name clings to Him all His life, and when He dies the title will be nailed over His head upon the Cross. It was thought a name of disgrace, a name to be ashamed of. So He kept it for Himself and made it His own. And because it is His we love it and reverence it, and hold it dear above all other names.

Joseph stands before the cottage door and pushes back the wooden bolt. Jesus is lifted

into His Mother's house, the door is shut and the *Hidden Life* begins. One sentence St. Luke has written : "The Child grew and waxed strong, full of wisdom and the grace of God was in Him"; and he says no more until our Lord is twelve years old. What a long silence. Why?

When we go to visit a poor person we find out what he wants most. Sometimes it is food, sometimes clothing, sometimes fire, and if we can, we get him what he wants. God looked down upon His children and saw that all of them, from the king on his throne to the beggars in the street—all wanted one virtue, the virtue of humility. He saw that if man was ever to get to heaven he must be taught to humble himself. Now humility is a very hard virtue to learn. We are like the cocks in the farm-yard; we like to get up on the wall and crow loud. We like to be thought of, to be made much of; we like to be praised and talked about. So our Blessed Lord came down upon earth to show us that all this is not worth caring for. He taught us what we are to think of notice and praise by hiding Himself away for twenty-eight years of His life, by letting no one know anything of Him during all that time, doing nothing for people to talk about, leaving nothing behind even for His Evangelists to write about. Isaias said: "Thou art a hidden God, the God of

Israel, the Saviour." What pride God must have seen in us that He should put aside thirty years to teach us to love a hidden life and some of us have not learnt it even yet. But some have learnt it and learnt it grandly. God's saints have followed their little Lord and loved what He loved and despised what He despised; they have left the pleasant things and pleasant places and have chosen to be hidden because of the "hidden God, the God of Israel, the Saviour."

"The Child grew and waxed strong, full of wisdom, and the grace of God was in Him."

"And is that really all we know about our Lord when He was a child?"

No, by no means. For we know He was a perfect little Child, a perfect little Jewish Child, one of a poor family, living in a country village. Now we know how little Jewish children were brought up, what their homes were like and what they learnt. Let us then picture to ourselves Jesus as such a little one and we shall have a very good idea how He passed His childhood. But as we go in and out of the holy house, as we follow Him about the streets and look into His face, let us often remind ourselves that He is God. We have seen pictures of the Holy Child in His Mother's arms with a globe in His hand. The globe is there because Jesus is the great God Who upholds the whole world: "He has measured the waters

in the hollow of His hand and weighed the heavens in His palm." And though He looks so small, so like yourselves, we know and believe that He is the all-powerful God.

Oh, had I but an angel's voice,
I would proclaim so loud—
Jesus, the good, the beautiful,
Is everlasting God!

Come into the little house and look around you. How brightly the oil-lamp shines on the scene! No wonder, for Mary cleans it herself. On the hearth in the middle of the floor chips of wood crackle noisily. St. Joseph brought them from his workshop last night. On your right is a chest for clothes, and there, near the door, is an oblong box, in which is kept a roll of parchment. Jesus is five years old now. He stands by His Mother's side and between them they hold a scroll. He is learning how to read the Hebrew text. From right to left the little finger moves as He points to the letters and reads them one by one; then He puts the words together—the little ones first, then the longer ones—until He reads the sentence: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart."

When the lesson is over, He goes with His Mother to fetch water from the fountain. Look at them going down the steep street hand in hand. Mary's head is covered with a veil; His hair falls over His shoulders; she holds the

empty pitcher in one hand and He trips lightly by her side. Sometimes they come home through the meadows and Jesus hears from His Mother the names of the flowers He created. And when Mary is busy at home Jesus tries to help her. She puts the dough upon the hot embers in the oven and Jesus watches to see it does not burn. She grinds the barley between the large stones in the court outside and Jesus puts out all His strength to help her to turn the handle. If there is a message to be carried to St. Joseph in the workshop Jesus takes it and waits for the answer. All Jewish children are taught to show great reverence and love for their parents, and Jesus is reverent and loving to His.

“And what about prayer at Nazareth. Did Jesus find it hard to pray?”

No, prayer was not hard to Jesus. He prayed when He played, He prayed when He worked, prayed when He rested. And His prayer was a bright ladder of light which stretched from the heart of the Child-God and reached the Eternal Father, Who leaned towards His holy little One and saw Him do His will upon earth as it is done in heaven.

Three times a day the Holy Family went to the synagogue to pray. They left their own little sanctuary because it was God's will, and because they wanted to give good example to the poor Nazarenes, and to worship with the

rest of the villagers. St. Joseph took his place with the men, Mary remained at the door with the other women, and Jesus stood at her side.

And so the years of childhood passed and Jesus "waxed strong." According to Jewish law every parent must teach his son a trade, and Jesus is taught the trade of a carpenter. Every day He accompanies His foster-father to the workshop ; it is a cave, some little distance from the house, fitted up with a bench, a ladder, some shelves ; a few scattered logs of wood lie on the stone floor. Little by little Jesus learns to handle the tools, to saw and to plane. He carries finished work home and asks for the money. He is treated like an ordinary errand-boy, and is often told to " Run away now and come back again at a more convenient time ;" or He is patted on the head and told to be a good child ! Sometimes the money is handed to Him with a bad grace, the work is found fault with or the price is too high. Jesus listens meekly ; He makes no excuse, offers no explanation. He takes all as if it were His due. Jesus, meek and humble of heart, make our hearts like unto Thine.

For meals Joseph and Jesus come home. Look at their bright faces as they stand in the door-way. Mary has been lonely without them, but now they make up to her for their absence. They do not talk much : there is no need, for

they understand each other so well. Their pleasure is to be in each other's company and that is a mark of love. Mary has the food all ready for them : barley cakes mixed with oil, a little fruit, and water from the fountain. But before they eat they wash their hands ; no good Israelite sits down to table with unwashed hands. Watch now and see the order of things in the holy house. There are no slaves to do the work, no servants to wait upon the Holy Family. Who serves them ? Not Joseph, he is the head of the household ; not our Lady, she has been at work all day, but Jesus, He is the Server. " Jesus is God," we say to ourselves, " God Who has come from heaven where thousands of thousands minister to Him," but He has come down to earth to be as one who serves. See Him pour water into the basin and carry it to St. Joseph ; see Him loose the latchet of his sandals and bathe the tired feet in the cool water and wipe them with the towel. Then they come to table, and Jesus is the last to sit down ; He helps His Mother, and He helps St. Joseph, and when all are finished He and Mary clear away.

Night comes, the day's work is over, and the evening psalms are said. Jesus goes to His little dark room to sleep. What were the last thoughts of the Divine Child ? Perhaps that strong word of love and desire : " Thy Kingdom come."

XII.

THE THREE DAYS' LOSS.

"I will seek Him Whom my soul loveth."
"In the streets and in the highways I will seek Him."

Look at that multitude entering Jerusalem: by every gate the people pour into the Holy City. Within the walls there is not a resting-place to be found—outside rude shelters are put up to house the strangers. The hillsides are covered with booths, the caves are inhabited. And still the pilgrims come from distant Africa, from Asia Minor, from Northern Syria—new arrivals every hour. Two million men with their faces set towards one great centre, with one great thought, to adore God in Jerusalem! I will worship *trad's* Thy holy Temple," they have said all the year round, but to-day their hearts beat higher and as they look up at the golden dome they sing, "How beautiful are Thy tabernacles, O God of Hosts:" "Our feet have stood in Thy courts, O Jerusalem."

How those Jews loved their holy Temple! There was a prophet called Jonas who was thrown into the sea and swallowed by a whale.

For three days and three nights he lived in the great sea monster with darkness all about him. Yet in his narrow prison he had one thought, one great hope. He raised his mind to God and said : " I am cast away out of the sight of Thy eyes, but yet *I shall see Thy holy Temple again.*"

Later on in Jewish history a terrible war was raging in Israel, but the brave soldiers felt less concern for their wives and children and for their brethren and kinsfolk than for their glorious Temple. " Their greatest and principal fear was *for the holiness of the Temple.*" They could bear to lose their dearest, but they could not bear to think of their sanctuary plundered and defiled.

" Sweet and comely as Jerusalem." Well might the Jews be proud of their city. Five grand hills, rugged and steep, hold it up towards heaven. There was Mount Moriah Temple-crowned ; Akra and Sion built over with palaces ; Ophel, the home of the poor ; Bezetha, Mount Moriah's lower step, and fastened about the city as a girdle of strength, was a high fortified wall with forty towers. And the Temple, the sanctuary of the Jews, for them the holiest spot on earth, what of that ? Try to understand its shape and build : we shall have to come here often, because our Blessed Lord comes here often and we are

going to follow Him, like Ruth followed Naomi, wheresoever He goes.

The crest of Mount Moriah is flat. Think you stand on its high platform ; before you is a stone wall. As you walk round you see it encloses a square tract of land—this is the outer Temple wall. There are eight massive gates which lead to the interior ; we may enter where we will. Here through the gate of Susa. Now we stand in Solomon's porch ; the pavement is richly coloured, the roof of carved cedar-wood, upheld by rows of stately marble columns. On we go to the Court of the Gentiles, a large open square with the blue sky above. Here all are admitted, Gentiles and Jews, men and women. But further than that richly-carved balustrade of stone no Gentile, under pain of death, dares enter. We are privileged and pass on up the fourteen marble steps that lead to the Court of the Women, through a covered porch, where for a moment we find shelter from the burning sun. In front of us stands the Nicanor gate. Do you remember what happened there twelve years ago ? The little Lord of the Temple was offered to God for the first time. Soon, very soon, before the sun goes down He will tread those steps and renew His offering.

Through the Nicanor gate into the Court of Israel only men could go ; beyond was the

Court of the Priests. In it stood the great altar of Burnt Offering, the brazen Laver, and the marble tables for sacrifice.

Up some steps we go, into the vestibule of the holy place. Now we stand where none but Jewish priests may stand. Over our heads, surmounting a golden door, rises a thick-branched vine with leaves and fruit of solid gold. Through that door is the holy place, with the table of shew-bread, the golden seven-branched candlestick, and the altar of incense.

Do you see that richly-wrought curtain with the figures of cherubim woven in gold? Behind is the Holy of Holies, a dark cell. And within what is there? A large flat stone—the *symbol* of God! Think for one moment of all that splendour, the rich sparkling marble, costly cedar and golden roofs covering a stone! What was all that magnificence worth, compared to the poorest, the meanest little Catholic chapel, with *its Holy of Holies*, where not a symbol of God, but God Himself, is truly present.

We must leave the Temple now and come to Mount Olivet; it is a vine-clad hill just outside the walls of Jerusalem. Wild olives and fig-trees are sprinkled over its sides. That huge wall, white as snow, which rises from the

base of Olivet, is the outer wall of the Temple. A little to our left is Gethsemani. No tears of blood have been shed there yet, but we look at the dark olive grove and think of what will happen there one day.

See that caravan coming along the dusty road. Listen to the strong glad voices of the men as they sing their psalms. They are the Galileans; they always encamp on this hill. And right glad the inhabitants of Jerusalem are, for these north country people are rough and noisy, and it is far more pleasant to have them safe outside the walls than within.

Yet when the angels looked down upon Jerusalem this Passover, where did they find rest? Was it in the palaces of Sion, where rich and noble strangers were housed in luxury, or in the merchant houses of the great city, or in Ophel, where the respectable poor lived? No, in none of these places, but outside the walls, on the slopes of Mount Olivet, amongst the despised people of Nazareth, in the poor shelter where Jesus, Mary and Joseph dwell. The holy spirits see thousands of victims offered up to God, they hear long prayers said and psalms sung, they see rich alms dropped into the Temple coffers, but they know that with the most of these Jews "God is not well pleased." Then they turn away and look at the Holy Family, and they see infinite praise

rise up from the Child-heart of their God, and once more they sing their glorious hymn of praise: "Glory be to God in the Highest."

Seven days pass and the caravans form for the return journey. Jesus is standing by His parents; soon they will have to separate, Joseph to go to the men, Mary to the women. She draws her veil over her beautiful face, and Joseph takes up his staff and walks to the front. But Jesus remains behind. His Sacred Heart swells with pain, for He is to cause suffering to those He loves best in the world. Gladly would He bear it all alone, but Mary and Joseph must share it with Him, for this pain consists *in giving pain*. None of His dear ones must suffer what He has not suffered, and some of His will have to wound the hearts of those they love better than themselves. They must see Him do it first, then it will be easier for them.

A few hours' journey and the caravan stops at Beeroth. It is getting towards evening. Mary and Joseph meet; but where is Jesus? They wait, thinking He will come up with them before sunset; but the encampment settles down for the night and there is no sign of Him. St. Joseph had supposed He was in the company, with His cousins, perhaps; Mary, that He was with Joseph. They seek Him in the growing darkness amongst their kinsfolk

and acquaintance, but He is nowhere to be found. Poor Mother! how white her face is, yet how calm. This trial is God's will, and His will must be done, at whatever cost.

It is too late, St. Joseph says, to return to the Holy City, but early in the morning they will go back to Jerusalem to seek for Him. So he leads Mary to the khan and they pass the night in prayer. How slowly the hours go by! Mary thinks of the future. Has Jesus left her for ever? Is He going to begin His work already? Again she says: "Behold the hand-maid of the Lord." She will be a childless mother, if it is God's will.

At last morning dawns, and with the first rays of light Mary and Joseph are on their way to the city. They reach it before mid-day. The streets are still crowded, many strangers linger still. But Mary's eyes seek only one—only the Child of twelve. Up Mount Moriah they go, through the marble courts of the Temple; but Jesus is not there.

Another night without Him; and Mary and Joseph watch and pray. Their hearts are weighed down with sorrow. Let us come to our Mother and to dear St. Joseph and try to comfort them with our love. Little children have often wiped away tears from grown-up people's eyes. Try to stop these tears that fall so fast, speak to that dear mother as you would

speak to your own if she were sad and sorrowful. And when you are in trouble go to the Mother of Sorrows and tell her all. None can sympathise like those who know what suffering is.

The third day dawns, and again Mary and Joseph go to the Temple.

In a covered porch near the Court of the Women a large assembly had gathered together. There were ancients with white hair and flowing beards; there were scribes, with a sharp, intent look in their eyes; there were Pharisees sitting on high-backed seats somewhat apart. On mats upon the floor boys of all ages crouched. They were looking up earnestly into the faces of their teachers and listening breathlessly to the discussions. Mary and Joseph join the group and look round the circle. The eyes of the Mother and Child meet. Oh, what joy fills those two loving hearts! St. Joseph sees Him too, and a deep peace fills his soul. Jesus is found at last. Now they can wait any time, wait and listen to Him, as gently and wisely He questions and answers the learned masters of Israel.

Not a sign has Mary made to show she is His Mother. Keeping close to Joseph she watches His every movement. See, He is speaking now! There is a great silence, for the Rabbis are courteous and allow even the

young to have their say. The Boy has asked a thrilling question, and the great men look at each other in astonishment. No one answers it, but they ask Him another question, and the Child, with downcast eyes and subdued voice, replies. *And all that heard Him were astonished at His wisdom and His answers.* For He has spoken wonderful words to them. He has asked burning questions that have stirred up the thoughts of those ancients of the people; and when the assembly breaks up some carry away a rich treasure of grace, but some harden their hearts and refuse it, though it cost that Child of twelve so much to offer it to them.

Very thoughtfully the elders fold up the parchment on their knees and rise to go away. The boys gaze with awe upon the beautiful face of their young companion. But He goes straight to where Mary and Joseph are standing and looks up at them. Oh, the love in that look! It makes up for all the past pain. Bending down they kiss the childish face and together they leave the Temple.

"Son," Mary says, "why hast Thou done so to us? Behold, thy father and I have sought Thee, sorrowing."

Sorrowing! He knew it so well. Knew, too, that He could have prevented it by one word, and yet for love of us He would not say

that word. Nor has the time yet come for Mary to know all. Only one reason can He give her now for His conduct.

"How is it that you sought Me?" he replies. "Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?" It is as if He had said: "Oh, Mother dear, why did you seek Me? If I was not with you, where could I be but in My Father's house, doing My Father's work? There is nothing else in the world that would keep Me from you."

Have you noticed that sometimes when you are spoken to, you hear the words that are said, but do not take in their meaning, but by thinking them over quietly the sense comes gradually to your mind.

Mary did not understand the words Jesus had spoken to her, but she kept them in her heart and pondered over them until they became a key to her understanding and opened out the meaning of many of our Lord's wonderful doings, which without them would have been closed to her.

Jesus was twelve years old. As a Jewish boy He had come of age. Very young it seems to us, does it not? But the people of the East grow up quickly. Like their fruit and corn they ripen earlier in the season than we do, and a Jew of twelve was a child no longer. He was considered "grown-up," supposed to be respon-

sible for his own acts ; he was allowed more liberty, and received many privileges, as a "son of Abraham."

See what Jesus did with His new powers. He made use of His liberty once, and once only—to consecrate it to His Heavenly Father. All the members of His Body He turned to God's use in the Temple for the salvation of souls. All the powers of His Soul He offered to Him for "His *business*." We love first-fruits—the *early* spring flowers, the *early* summer roses, the *early* remembrance on our birthdays. So does Almighty God, and Jesus is early in His consecration of Himself. To God His Father He gives the very first fruits of His garden, the very earliest use of all that now has become His to offer.

But just as the Babe six weeks old offered Himself to God and was given back into His Mother's arms, so now the Boy of twelve, having offered His liberty and all His wonderful powers for the redemption of the world, puts Himself again into the hands of His parents. He may choose His own vocation now, for He is of age. He chooses to be subject to them. "He went down to Nazareth, and was subject to them."

There was a great saint once who meditated long upon the goodness of God, the greatness of His gifts, and the love of the Giver. Then

he burst out into this prayer: "To Thee, O Lord, I offer my liberty, my memory, my understanding, and my will. All I have, all I possess, I have received from Thee, and to Thee I return it whole and entire. Give me Thy love and Thy grace—this is sufficient for me."

It was a generous prayer, and it was a generous saint who made it. Let us ask him, Ignatius of Loyola, to teach us the prayer and the spirit of it, so that, with Jesus in the Temple, we may offer to our Heavenly Father ourselves and our all.

"Take, O Lord, and receive."

HIDDEN LIFE.

Back again to Nazareth! What a joyful homecoming that was, and what joy in the little village amongst the simple folk! For they love the Son of Mary, and have been anxious about Him ever since they heard He was missing. Now they crowd round about Him. These four boys running up here are the cousins of Jesus, sons of Mary, our Lady's sister. This one with the long dark hair is James; near him is Jude, who later speaks of himself as "the servant of Jesus Christ." Simon is the quick-eyed restless boy near to Joseph, his brother, whom we do not know at all. These children,

with their sisters, are brought up with Jesus. They see Him every day, and love Him because He is so kind, so true, so generous, but they have no higher thoughts about Him. They belong to those Jews who are expecting a Messiah, but a Messiah who will make their nation glorious—one who will be a conqueror a hero, strong of arm and wise in council, who will crush the Roman power and expel the Roman army from their country. Him they will join, they tell each other, for Him they will risk life and happiness and everything. But they must share the honours of the conqueror, they must have high places at his court, and come off well when the booty is divided.

Jesus knows their thoughts. For eighteen years He will live amongst them, and every day He will hear them talk of their hopes and their ambitions. But He will not tell them *His* secret; the time is not yet come for that. He has higher places for some of them, and greater honours, than they have chosen for themselves. But they would not value His honours yet, so He keeps them for them, and waits patiently till the appointed hour comes. And it will come. Two at least of that little group are chosen to be Apostles, His own dear Apostles, who will lay down their lives for His sake, and think their martyrdom honour enough.

But now they are only clumsy lads, with no

thought beyond this world and how to get on here. Yet even now they have learnt one heavenly secret—to have a personal love for Mary, the Mother of Jesus. They feel wonderfully drawn towards her, and hang about her cottage door, and go messages for her, and are almost chivalrous in serving her. When they grow up we nearly always find them with her. *His Mother and His brethren came.* “Behold, *Thy Mother and Thy brethren* without seek Thee.” Jesus “went down to Capharnaum, *He and His Mother, and His brethren.*” And when all is over, and Jesus has risen gloriously from the tomb, we find these same “brethren” in that blessed upper room waiting for the descent of the Holy Ghost. They “were persevering with one mind in prayer with the women and Mary the Mother of Jesus, and with His brethren.” It seems as if they formed a sort of bodyguard for our Blessed Lady, and kept her with them when Joseph was dead. And very wise they were to keep so close to Mary. If they had been cunning, which they were not, they could not have found a better means of securing a high place in the Kingdom of the great Messiah.

When the evening of that joyful day came, Jesus, Mary, and Joseph said their prayers together before they separated for the night, and the Child bent His head for His “parents’”

blessing. Then they knew that it was His will to be subject to them now, just as before, and that the hidden life would go on as if no three days' agony had broken into it.

"Does that quiet life at Nazareth begin again and go on for eighteen years more?"

Yes, it does. Let us face the fact as Jesus faced it. He saw the long road without a turning stretch out before Him and He walked along step by step, calm, patient, and unwearied. We get very tired of school-routine, of home dullness, and monotonous work, yet it has to be gone through. Look at the thousands of children, of grown-up people, whose life is the same day by day, so humdrum, so quiet, so wearisome. Some bear it patiently, but the spirited ones, as they call themselves, toss their heads and fret and fume and wish they could only show the world what is in them. Only give them a chance, they say, and then—nobody knows what that *then* means. They never seem to get a chance, or at least, not *the* chance they require, and so they wear out their spirits in impatience and fretting.

What a pity! Why do they not look at Jesus hidden in the workshop at Nazareth? Why do they not compare their talents and their powers with His and see if after all it is such a waste of good material that theirs should be hidden when His were buried for thirty years

and used for three. "The disciple is not above the Master, is he? And if Jesus is not the Master, who is? And if we are not His disciples, whose are we?"

Did not our Lord know well what He was doing when He chose to spend His life at Nazareth? He could so well teach humility from the little cottage there. People say of a great doctor: "He is a very clever man and *has had much practice*." Our Blessed Lord wanted it to be said of Him, "*He has had much practice*; He has a right to teach humility for He has been humble so long."

It was very loving of Him, too, to come amongst us so poor and humble. It made those who followed Him feel at home in His company. They were poor but He was poorer, their hands were rough with hard work, His were rough, too, and horny, with the use of the saw and the hatchet; their relations were ignorant common folk, so were His, our Lady excepted. Their homes were in fishing villages and His was in despised Nazareth. So they found Him out and followed Him without shame and felt He was one of themselves, used to the shifts of poverty and to the contempt of men. Well did it come from those Blessed Lips to say: "Blessed are ye poor, for yours is the Kingdom of God."

And so Jesus goes back to the workshop with

St. Joseph and takes up His daily tasks. And as the years go by He becomes stronger, and St. Joseph, by a slow decline grows weaker, until he has to give up work altogether. Then Jesus is the Carpenter of Nazareth. He makes the benches and the ploughs, the tables and shelves; He lays down flooring and fits door-posts and outer staircases. We wonder how He did it all. Did He show His Divine skill, did He carve beautiful patterns, begin a new style of furniture? No. He had been St. Joseph's apprentice and He worked according to St. Joseph's rules, He made everything as St. Joseph had taught Him. He was a *village* carpenter. What did those labourers want with improved machinery and elegant carts, or carved furniture? The best work is that which is best suited to its end, and such was the work that came from Joseph's shop.

Yet, of its kind that work was perfect. Jesus worked for His Heavenly Father and His Heart was full of reverence for Him. He could not have offered Him anything unworthy of Him. In His human nature He was bound to revere and praise and serve Him as we are bound.

So into every action He put all His human skill and performed it as perfectly as He could.

“BEHOLD I COME QUICKLY.”

Thirty years is a long time, yet it has an end. And the thirty years of the hidden life at Nazareth were over. St. Luke tells us that Jesus being about the age of thirty, began to preach. The last words the saint wrote of Him were that “He advanced in wisdom and age and grace with God and man.”

Think! Thirty years Jesus has been outwardly growing more wise, more gracious, more pleasing to God and man. As God He could know no change. In Mary’s arms He was true God, on the Cross He was true God; but as man, He grew as children grow. When He was a child He was like a rosebud—beautiful, but as a man He was like the flower in full bloom—perfect. Of Adam, before his sin, it was said that he was the “image and glory of God,” that he was “incorruptible.” And Jesus? Was He not the true glory of God? His Body was to suffer and to die, but it could not “see corruption.” Holy writers say that at the Transfiguration, when His Face shone like the sun, no miracle took place, but a miracle ceased; that is to say, that without a miracle the Face of Jesus would always have shown as the sun, for it only thinly veiled His Divinity.

Try to picture that Divine Face. It was oval-shaped and fair; the hair auburn, turned

back from the forehead and falling over the shoulders; the eyes hazel, perhaps, with an expression that we cannot picture to ourselves. We have seen nothing like it. The eyes of men tell wonderful tales. The eyes of Jesus told of infinite strength and power, of infinite love, compassion, and tenderness.

Once a little child, a new comer at school, sat in the midst of her companions and looked intently at each in turn. When she had made the round she pointed with her finger to one and said :

“I like her.”

“Why do you like her?” someone asked.

“I like her eyes,” the little one answered. She was right; the eyes were not particularly beautiful, but they were good and told of a beautiful soul.

What must the eyes and the face of Jesus have been like? Let us think of them when we are dry and cold at our prayers.

The last day of the Hidden Life has come. Let us spend it at Nazareth with Jesus and His Blessed Mother. We need not be afraid of being in the way. We are never in their way, they love us too much. Look at Mary's face; it is very peaceful, but the tears roll down her cheeks. We know why she cries. Poor Mother! She is going to part with Jesus and her heart aches sorely. But she is strong.

Her will is His Will, and the two are one in God's Will. Still the pain she suffers is not less a pain because she wills to suffer it.

Look at Jesus. He is going to the workshop for the last time. He will be back early, for He took no new orders last night and there remains little to finish this morning. See, the children have caught sight of Him and gather round Him, a little troop. They found out long ago that He loved them and so they spend their play-time with Him. They bring Him their broken toys to mend, they sit on the floor cross-legged and look up into His Face. Very often He tells them little stories that make them think, and the thinking makes them good. Then they go home happy, sometimes with a new toy in their little hands or some old favourite made almost as good as new, and they tell their parents the story they have heard.

To-day they come as a matter of course; they do not know it is His last day in the workshop, but they notice He is very tender with them, that His eyes glisten as if they shone through tears and they look up wonderingly at Him. When they say good-bye He gives them the kiss of peace, and in some little hearts the peace enters and remains all their lives. Blessed little children of Nazareth!

Now Jesus has finished His work. He

collects His tools, gathers up the shavings, and leaves the shop exquisitely neat. He crosses the street and re-enters His home. Mary is waiting for Him and takes the tools out of His hands and lays them reverently by. She serves the last meal that they take alone together.

Jesus tells His Mother what He is going to do now. He tells her of His Baptism in the Jordan, of the long fast He will keep, of His temptation in the desert. He tells her where to meet Him when He comes back to Galilee, and how to spend the time when He is away. She is to share His toil, His sufferings, His sorrows; near or far she is to take part with Him.

The hours go by and the parting is very near. Is all ready for the journey? Are there no preparations to be made? None, for Jesus has nothing to take away and little to leave behind. His tools were Joseph's, they are His Mother's now. The mat on which He has lain for thirty years, the cup He has used every day, the furniture of His little room, all are Mary's. Of His own He has nothing. The robes He wears Mary has made and given to Him. He has no staff for His journey, no purse, no money. Jesus is soon ready.

The sun is going down and He rises. The hour of parting has come. Mary's voice is

steady. Jesus has taken her hands in His and strength goes out from Him to her. He thanks her for her love and tenderness and blesses her. Then He turns away gently and calmly and takes the road that leads to the south.

Mary watches Him till the white robes are lost in the distance, then she goes back into the Holy House and prays.

Part II,

XIII.

THE DELIGHTFUL LAND.

“The land of which all is most dear to Thee.”—WIS. xii.

HAVING parted with His Blessed Mother, our Lord went south. Before joining Him we will learn what that land of His was like. For if we can see the country and busy towns in which He taught, hear the sounds of the lake and the rushing river, and the noisy market places; and make some picture in our minds of the persons He met, the houses and synagogues in which He taught, the fields and lanes through which He passed, we shall be able to understand better the Divine words that fell from His lips.

Palestine is a little country, not much larger than Wales, or about twice the size of Yorkshire. It was God's gift to His chosen people and like all His gifts it was very good. Even the Israelites, who were not easily pleased, praised this gift of God. When they were going to settle in this Land of Promise, about 1,400 years before our Lord's birth, they took a survey of the country and said: “The land

which we have gone round is very good," it is "good and spacious," "flowing with milk and honey," "a delightful land."

In our Lord's lifetime it was divided into three provinces : Galilee in the north, Samaria in the centre, Judea in the south. West of these provinces and beyond the river, lay Ituria, Trachonitis, and Perea. Like the Israelites we will take a survey and start at once from the north.

Standing with our backs to Damascus, one of the oldest cities in the world, we have in front of us the famous Lebanon range. That snowy peak on our left, rearing its head 11,000 ft. above the sea, is Mount Hermon. Somewhere near its base, three streams meet each other and joining together make the most celebrated river in the world, the Jordan of Holy Scripture. Its name means "descender" and a fitting name it is, for its course is one long downward tumble of two hundred miles. Leaving the Lebanon range, it rushes southward until it reaches the deep hollow of Merom, which it fills with its frothy waters. Then after another uneasy run, it falls into the beautiful Lake of Genesareth, out of which it flows through high banks of rock, through pleasant country where tamarisk and willows and oleanders grow, and through wild regions where savage beasts roam howling. In and out it curves, so restless, so strong, and

so boisterous, that no ship dares trust its freight upon it, no little skiff floats down its water-way. South and more south it rushes till, within a few miles of the desolate Dead Sea, it checks its hurried pace and flows gradually more slowly, as if unwilling to meet its fate in those treacherous depths.

Look at that sea ; its waters appear to us as clear and blue as the Mediterranean, but touch them—they are “salt, slimy, and fetid beyond description.” Taste them if you dare, they are like a mixture of “brine and rancid oil.”

On its western border lies Judea with the wilderness pressed close up to the water's edge. This wilderness is a country of dried-up valleys, stony fields, and ashy grey moorland.

As we go up country the ground rises. To the west of us lie the steep mountains of Judea which Mary crossed on her visit to St. Elizabeth. On five of these same hills stands Jerusalem, “the loveliness of God's beauty ;” Olivet rises up at its feet and Bethany looks towards it from a hill beyond.

A little to the north of the Dead Sea, in the robber-country, lies “Jericho of the Palms,” and far away by the sea-shore stretches a fertile plain where the Philistines, Israel's earliest enemy, fought the mighty battles of old.

As we journey northward, we come to a river that like a silver girdle winds midway across

Palestine. We land on the other side and find ourselves in Samaria.

Samaria is wonderfully fertile ; numerous flocks feed in the rich grass ; fields of corn wave their white masses for miles round—*white*, notice ; the wheat of the Holy Land is white, not yellow, like ours in England. Over there, to the far west, we see Carmel's beautiful head and the lovely plain of Saron stretching away beside the blue sea.

Look, down there, almost in the middle of Samaria, are the twin-mountains, Garizim and Ebal, and in the valley between them is a spot that carries us far back into Old Testament times—a deep well with cool fresh water. It is the well Jacob, that holy one of God, bought from the stranger. Soon we shall find *the* Holy One of God sitting on its curb-stones. The story is a beautiful one, but we must wait for it.

From Samaria we come to *Galilee*. Such a sunny land is Galilee. In spring the flowers cover the fields and hillsides ; the anemone and lily, the rose and the poppy make it look like a spreading garden. The air is sweet with the breath of flowers. The birds sing in the trees ; partridges peep shyly from the rocky banks. Up in the hills the eagles hover, and large vultures with their keen eyes keep a sharp look-out for prey. Wild beasts—jackals and wolves—find their homes in lonely spots.

To Galilee belongs that "pearl" as it is called, the Lake of Genesareth. It lies in a deep hollow, which partly accounts for the climate being almost tropical. Its shores are desolate now, but in the time of our Lord they were the home of a dense population. Hundreds of vessels sailed upon its white waters and fishermen grew rich from the produce of its deep sea. Wealthy cities studded the plain on its western banks. This plain on account of its fertility was called "The Paradise of Galilee" and "The Garden of Princes." There the fig and olive, the vine and the palm, the nopal and oleander grew. It was there our Lord spent the greater part of His public life. Magdala, a town noted for its wealth and wickedness, was there, and Tiberias, a Gentile port; Capharnaum, our Lord's "own city;" Bethsaida, the home of Peter, and Andrew, and Philip. There also were Cana, Nain "the beautiful," and Nazareth, the little town we love so well. Towering above them was Mount Thabor, and beyond, the rich meadow-like plain of Esdraelon stretching between the mountains of Carmel on the west and those of Gilboa on the east.

Beautiful Galilee! the home of His childhood, how our Lord loved it. He shares with us every holy love, and the love of country is holy, implanted in our hearts by God Him-

self. He is leaving it now for a while and is going down to Judea to begin His public life. We must follow Him, because His life is the model for ours. "Follow Me," He says. Elder children are told to be very careful what they do before the little ones, because they are so apt to imitate. Jesus is our Elder Brother, and the best of elder brothers. He says to all, big and little, rich and poor, clever and stupid, "Follow Me," and He says it because He will look well to His footsteps. He will measure His distance by the weakest amongst us. He will not tread where the weakest may not follow, or if the path becomes dangerous and the night dark, He will stoop down and carry the little ones and put a strong arm round the timid. Oh, we may follow Him without fear, we may put our hand into His and trust our lives with Him. If we are not safe with Him, with whom shall we be safe?

It is the fifteenth year of the reign of the Emperor Tiberius, Pontius Pilate is Procurator of Judea, our Lord is in the thirtieth year of His age.

XIV.

THE KING AND HIS AMBASSADOR.

“Be prepared to meet thy God, O Israel.”

FOR some time past there has been much excitement in Galilee. Persons coming from Judea say that a great prophet is preaching in the south, and that he has wonderful power over the people, who come to him from Jerusalem and Judea, and the country beyond the Jordan. By some he is thought to be Elias, or perhaps even the promised Messiah Himself.

The Galileans are stirred by the news. What if this great prophet *were* the Messiah? What if the long years of waiting were over at last? They will go and see and hear this man of God, and judge for themselves. So from Nain and Nazareth, Cana and Capharnaum, and the neighbouring cities, a caravan is formed and journeys southward. Jesus travels with it.

Through the beautiful plains of Esdraelon the Galileans journey, near the busy town of Scythopolis, down by the mountains of Samaria and Judea, and through the rugged country to the Jordan. On the Jericho road it falls in with

the multitudes of the south. From them the travellers hear more about the new prophet, and wonder who he is.

Do *you* know who he is? Do *you* remember Zachary's vision in the Temple, and the promise God made him there? It was autumn then. When spring came, with its delicate flowers and its song of birds, the child of promise was born, and Zachary's "mouth was opened and his tongue loosed, and he spoke blessing God." Taking the child in his arms he looked into its little face and cried out: "Thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest, for thou shalt go before the Lord to prepare His ways, to give knowledge of salvation to His people, unto the remission of their sins."

Thirty years have passed since that day, and St. John is a man. Of his childhood we know little, only that he grew and was strengthened in spirit, and was in the deserts until the day of his manifestation to Israel." These words mean that when he was quite little he left his home in Karim, and went alone into the wilderness, where he fasted and prayed and did penance.

The desert of Judea was a wild place for a home. Not a tree, nor a bush, nor a blade of grass was to be seen — only steep hill-ranges cut into by gloomy valleys, waste plains sprinkled over by scanty tufts of dried-up grass

and stunted brushwood, where savage beasts hid. In the clefts of the rocks John found honey made by the wild bees; this, with locusts, a sort of grasshopper, was all the food he took. The water-brooks gave him a drink when he was thirsty. His dress was rough camel-skin, fastened by a leathern girdle round his waist. His hair was long, for he was a Nazarite, and the razor might not pass over his head; his face was weather-beaten. If you had seen him in the dusk you might almost have feared him, but with the light of day upon his face you would have seen the stamp of holiness there. He *was* holy; his soul was like a pure white lily, fresh and fair in God's sight.

Twenty-eight years John has been preparing for his mission! "Go and get ready," a father says to his boy, "and wait till I call you." "Go and get ready," the Holy Spirit said to John, "and wait till I call you." And he went and prayed and fasted and got ready. At last the call *to prepare the way* came, and John gathered round him a great multitude.

There was a ford on the Jordan called Bethabara. People from Perea crossed it many times a day—some going to, some returning from Jericho. This was a good place for John's purpose. It was on the border of the wilderness, and God's voice is better heard when men's voices are hushed. Here, then, John

stationed himself, and, as he hoped, crowds came to listen.

Now anyone might think that a man who had lived all his life alone, far from other men, would know nothing of the busy multitudes, that he could not understand their ways and their temptations. Such was not the case with John. He looked down upon the crowds before him, and read them through and through. They were the children of the fathers to whom the promise was given; they were God's own people, and yet their hearts were far from Him, and John knew he would have to labour long and hard before they would be ready to receive their Messiah.

With wistful eager faces the multitude looked up to him as he stood on a little mound preaching. They were "a nation expecting, expecting," and the sight of John raised their hopes to the highest pitch, for they felt his greatness and his power. If he were not the Messiah himself, at least he would tell them of Him. So they crowded round him from early morning till late at night, some standing in groups, others sitting on the rocks, some leaning up against huge boulders, others kneeling forward, too absorbed to think of being tired. What a picture it was! ages, ranks, tribes all different. But these differences were nothing to what the angels saw—the difference in the souls of these men.

There were *Pharisees*, rich and powerful, who looked to their fellow-creatures for the reward of their virtue. They fasted a great deal and boasted about it, gave money to the poor to be seen of men, carefully observed minute Jewish customs, but broke God's great commandments. There were *Sadducees* who dared to deny what God had revealed: "There is no resurrection, nor angel, nor spirit," they said. There were *Herodians* who copied Roman ways and tried to gain favour with King Herod that they might get high places at his court. There was the *multitude*, among whom were some good and holy, in whose hearts John had little to do by way of preparation for his Master; and some ignorant and weak, easily led by the chief priests and rulers. Then there were the *soldiers*, only half-civilised for the most part, yet men who really did want to know their duty and do it. And the *publicans* whose business was a daily temptation, and who were despised and shunned by all who wanted to appear respectable.

John raises his hand, and there is not a sound. Clear and loud his voice is heard ringing through the wilderness:

"Ye brood of vipers!" The people shudder. There can be no doubt whom he means, for he has turned right round upon the Pharisees.

"Ye offspring of vipers, who hath shewed

you to flee from the wrath to come?" If it is at God's call you come here, show it by doing penance, and do not pretend that because you are Abraham's children, you need nothing more to make you pleasing in God's sight. If God wants children He can make them out of these stones. This is the last chance offered to you; humble yourselves now, do penance now; in a short time it will be too late. The axe is laid to the tree one moment, and it will be felled, cut to pieces, and cast into the fire."

These are awful words, but the Pharisees are not touched. Anger and indignation are roused within them, yet they dare not show their malice because of the people. We shall find all through the Gospel-story what cowards these Pharisees are. They would put John to death but *for fear of the people*; they will seek our Lord's life, but will wait three years *for fear of the people*, and then they will gain their end by underhand means—false witness, perjury, and blasphemy.

Humble themselves! no, not they. John's disciples confess their sins and receive baptism as a sign of repentance, but such rites are not for Pharisees. They cannot fancy themselves standing with the common people in the Jordan, nor confessing their sins, when it is their profession to be without sin. The Pharisees go home as they came, rich, proud, and unforgiven.

The people stand thoughtfully looking after them. John's words have filled them with fear. There is no time to be lost, they think ; they must find out what "works worthy of penance" are expected from them.

"Master, what then shall we do?"

John lowers his voice and speaks gently. He knows what the Master wants. His disciples are to love one another, to be pitiful and kind to those in distress.

"He that hath two coats, let him give to him that hath none ; and he that hath meat, let him do in like manner."

Awkwardly and timidly the publicans come up to him.

"Master, what shall we do?"

"Do nothing more than that which is appointed you."

Short advice to those who committed so many grievous sins! Yet it contained all that was needful. For the publicans or tax-gatherers were in the habit of doing a great deal more than was appointed them. The Roman taxes weighed heavily enough on the people, but they were made to weigh more heavily by the cruel manner in which they were gathered in. Doing nothing more than what was appointed would put a stop to all dishonest dealings. Poor despised publicans, they confess their sins and show their willingness to do penance. The

water of the baptism of penance is poured on their heads, and they go away at peace with God and with themselves.

And the soldiers also asked him, saying :

“And what shall we do?”

“Do violence to no man, neither calumniate any man and be content with your pay.”

Did not John know the hearts of men? Here were strong soldiers who wounded or killed in a moment of passion, who thought nothing of ruining others by their false testimony and who, far from being content with their pay or anything else, fell upon the weak and robbed them of food and clothing and money. But now at John's word they resolve to do better; they are sorry for their wicked deeds, and ask to be baptised. Their brazen helmets and shining breast-plates are laid aside and they receive the baptism of penance. Then they, too, go home with hearts made ready for the Messiah.

And so day by day the people came and went, months of hard missionary work passed, and still John waited. Like the people, he was “expecting, expecting;” longing to look upon the Messiah, to see the sign from Heaven by which he was to recognise Him: *He upon Whom thou shalt see the spirit descending and remaining upon Him, he it is that baptises with the Holy Ghost.*

The caravans from Galilee had taken up their

quarters on the shores of the Jordan. The people stretched their tents and tethered their beasts, then followed the river to a sedgy spot where the crowd was thicker. Jesus was with them and in His turn came forward to be baptised. John saw Him, knew Him, and full of joy went forward to greet Him. Jesus and His Precursor met. What a meeting that was! John poured into our Lord's ear all the love of his strong heart, all the longing of his life. And Jesus, what did He say to John? There are people in the world who are full of gratitude, who remember every little kindness, but there never was a heart so grateful as the heart of Jesus. Not one word said for love of Him, not one drop of the sweat of our brow is lost, all is treasured up to be rewarded with an eternal reward. Think then what a welcome He would have for John, how He would repay him for all he had done! Oh, the saints have never repented that they chose Jesus for their Lord!

As He spoke Jesus drew John towards the river. When He reached the brink He stepped down into the shallow water. John watches Him, and sees what He is about to do and tries to prevent Him.

"I have need to be baptised by Thee and comest Thou to me?"

"Suffer it to be so now, for so it becometh us to fulfil all justice," Jesus answered.

What a loving answer! "*We* shall fulfil"—you and I, John; you by your obedience, I by My humility, so we both of us shall give glory to God by doing the right, the just thing. "Then he suffered Him."

And so Jesus was baptised in the midst of tax-gatherers, soldiers, and public sinners. He was sinless. But He bore our sins and suffered the shame of a public penance for our sakes.

God the Father was watching overhead and God the Holy Ghost was brooding over Him, and they determined that Jesus in His sacred humanity should be glorified because He was so humble. The heavens open and the Holy Spirit descends in the form of a dove, and the Eternal Father speaks with a human voice. "*This is my Beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased.*" The angels who had so loyally worshipped Him when He was an infant, sing a glad new song of triumphant praise, and rejoice because of His "own great glory." John stands by awe-struck. This was the sign he had waited for. He saw the Messiah glorified and triumphed in His glory. His own work was almost done. *He shall increase and I will decrease*, and the thought was a joy to him.

Our Lord shares with us all He can share. As He is the Son of God by nature, He makes us sons of God by adoption. At His baptism He was declared the well-Beloved Son of God.

At our baptism we became the sons of God, heirs to the Kingdom of Heaven. And heirs with such a good right that no one can disinherit us but ourselves. What a wonderful Sacrament Baptism is. Historians tell us that St. Louis, King of France, was far more proud of his title of Christian than his title of King. He signed Himself Louis de Poisey, because it was at Poisey he was baptised. Is it such a wonderful thing? An earthly kingdom weighs light when balanced against a heavenly one. St. Louis weighed his kingdom and found it very light indeed.

The crowd had fallen back a little when Jesus came to be baptised, and the people stood watching the scene with astonishment. Why was John's manner so reverent? Why did his face glow and his eyes shine so brightly when he spoke to the stranger? "And who can the stranger be?" they whispered. The question passed from one to the other and the answer came: "Jesus of Nazareth, the carpenter." And so He was, but He was God too, the only begotten of the Father, the Son, in Whom He was well pleased.

"And immediately Jesus was led by the spirit into the desert."

XV.

IN THE DESERT.

“ ‘Behold, I come against thee, O proud one,’ saith the Lord.”

HAVE you ever listened to the great silence of the night, when all people and things seem to sleep and nothing stirs the air, not even a butterfly's wing? If so, did it not make you feel near to God?

It was such a solitude that Jesus sought after His baptism. He went away from the crowds on the Jordan, passed Jericho, and climbed the steep slopes of a desolate mountain. Far away from men's houses He went, into places where only the beasts live. They were wild, but when He came near they were wild no longer. The jackals ate their meals at His feet and the lions rested up against His knees, and the eagles hovered round His head.

Look at our Lord kneeling in the reddish-brown cave; watch Him at prayer. His face is turned to the light, but His eyes do not see the moving clouds nor the blue sky. They look far away beyond. His hands are joined and quite still. His soul is with God. What a

hush there is around Him. In the distance the deep roar of the lion is heard, and the howl of the wolf, but near Him all is peace. Here our Lord prays and fasts for forty days and forty nights.

Forty days! The thought frightens us and we wonder which is worse—forty days' prayer or forty days' fasting, and we cannot make up our minds. Well, we need not. We shall be asked to do neither, probably. There certainly have been saints who have prayed and fasted forty days without stopping, but very few, and *they were saints* and "led by the Spirit," as Jesus was. But putting aside forty days' prayer, why do we find it so hard to pray and why are we so astonished that the saints could pray so much? It is because we pray so little. "A little penance hurts a great deal," those say who have tried it, "but a great deal does not." It is the same with prayer. A little tires, a great deal rests.

Some boys heard that one of their masters was a saint and spent no end of time in chapel. They determined to put him to the test. One day when he was motionless upon his knees before the Blessed Sacrament, they came in noiselessly, crept up behind him, and strewed some bits of paper, torn into feathery shreds, upon his glossy cassock. So delicately did the bits fall that the slightest movement on

his part would have scattered them to the ground. Two hours' study followed for the boys. As soon as they were free they rushed back to the chapel to see how their plan had succeeded. Cautiously they opened the door. There was the father motionless as before, wrapt in prayer, with his eyes turned towards the Blessed Sacrament, and the bits of paper undisturbed on his back. The thoughtless boys stood looking at him for a few moments, awe-struck. It was a beautiful face, the face of a real saint they thought. Kneeling down beside him they prayed too, and a few moments after when they got up to go it was with a new feeling about prayer. They had learnt a lesson they never forgot.

Do you think those two hours seemed long to that holy man? They must have passed without his knowing how. He was resting with God.

Think then how prayer would rest our Lord! It rested Him as sleep rests us. "Let us go to sleep," we say when we are tired out. "Let us go apart a little and pray," our Lord used to say when His apostles were hard-worked; and the saints have taken up His thought and His words, and they have worked all day and prayed at night, finding prayer rested them.

When the forty days were ended and Jesus rose from His knees "He was hungry." Whilst He was in prayer our Lord did not

want food. Some of His saints did not either. There was a holy abbot once who never knew when it was meal-time. One of the novices was charged to remind him. "Rise, father, let us eat," he would say. And the holy man would answer: "Are you sure we did not eat just now?" "Quite sure," the hungry boy would answer. "Oh, well, my son, if we did not eat, come, let us eat."

But our Blessed Lord does not say: "Come, let us eat." He has other work to do first. He is going to give us one of the greatest proofs of His love.

This world is a *battlefield* where Heaven is lost or won. The *soldiers* are all the men and women who come into the world. The *enemies* are the world, the flesh, and the devil. The *war* is temptation—a challenge from the enemies to make us prove on whose side we are. There are only two sides—God's side and the enemies'—and we have to choose.

Now to make a right choice is the hard part of temptation, for the enemies are cruel, cunning, and untiring, and they set us terrible snares. One of these enemies is Lucifer, the devil, and he is what is called "a veteran," that is, one who has had much experience in real war. Nearly six thousand years ago he tempted Eve in the Garden of Paradise, and since then

he has never ceased to tempt mankind. Every hour of the day he tempts, and every hour of the night. He studies men's characters and dispositions, and watches their moods. He knows when they are on their guard, when they are careless, when they are out of sorts, and when they are cheerful, and he suits his temptation to their humour. Oh, we are no match for the devil ; his intellect is far stronger than ours, his will more powerful. What shall we do, then, for we must fight and we must conquer if we want to go to Heaven.

When a child is frightened it says : " Father, you go first," and then with great courage it walks close behind. We would like to be such a child, and have someone strong to go first, and show us how to conquer—someone like David to kill our Goliath. Then we could easily overcome the rest of our enemies, we think. Yet David, brave and strong as he was, could be of no use to us in our temptations. He could protect us from Philistines, but not from the devil. There is only One Who can be any help to us here—*God-made Man*, our elder brother, Jesus. But how could He, Who is God, go first into temptation ? How could temptation come near to Him ?

St. Luke says : *Jesus was tempted by the devil*. If an Evangelist had not told us this we never could have believed it, but he does

tell us, and therefore it is of faith. Jesus, Who could commit no sin, was really tempted. Evil inclinations He had none ; the flesh could be no temptation to Him. But He allowed the devil to come near and to suggest evil things to Him.

How our Lord loved us ! Temptation is not sin, but it is nearness to sin, and His temptations brought the devil very close to our Lord. He touched Him, spoke to Him, stood by Him. We cannot imagine how much our Lord suffered by this nearness to the wicked enemy. There is only one thing, perhaps, that can distantly give us an idea of what sin is to God, and that we hardly care to speak about. It is like a bad smell. We shrink from a bad smell, we turn instinctively away from it. Brave men who can bear pain without showing what they feel, turn sick at a bad smell. Such is sin before God. And yet our Lord bore even this—nearness to sin—to comfort and strengthen us. This is the great proof of His love that He gave us here.

Our Lord was weak. He had been without food for forty days, and He was exhausted. We often feel hungry after a long walk, after a sea-bath. But this is not real hunger—it is only appetite. We do not know what hunger is. Think of those pictures you have seen of

the famished Indians—the wasted arms, the thin faces, the large eyes—that is what real hunger does. Yet none of those poor creatures had fasted forty days. Our Lord was worn and wasted, and the devil saw it. See how companionable the devil makes himself. He tempts our Lord *with food*. He does not know that Jesus is God, but he suspects it, and he tempts Him to work a miracle to satisfy His hunger.

“If Thou be the Son of God, say to this stone that it be made bread.” And the tempter picked up from the ground a stone that was loaf-shaped, and held it up to our Lord. The sight of food makes us feel our hunger more. But Jesus knew it was not the will of His Father that He should use His power to get a meal. Calmly, and with great majesty, He answered the tempter:

“It is written that man liveth not by bread alone, but by every word of God.” Had not our Lord a right to use these words? For forty days He had lived on the word of God alone.

The devil now tried another plan. If Jesus is the Messiah He will be glad to draw people's attention to Himself—glad to have an opportunity of showing His miraculous power. He will give Him one.

“And he brought Him to Jerusalem, and set Him on a pinnacle of the Temple; and he said to Him: ‘If Thou be the Son of God, cast

Thyself from hence, for it is written that He hath given His angels charge over Thee, that they keep Thee, and that in their hands they shall bear Thee up, lest perhaps Thou dash Thy foot against a stone.”

It was the time of evening prayer. The courts of the Temple were thronged with worshippers. This was the moment for the Messiah to declare Himself the Son of God. By descending, as it were, from Heaven, and standing unharmed in their midst, He would prove Himself to be God.

Jesus said to him :

“It is written again : ‘Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.’”

Another defeat ! But the evil one tried once more. Great men are always ambitious, that is, they aim high. Jesus of Nazareth is a great man, that the devil has found out long ago. He will see if He can be tempted in His ambition. He led Him into a high mountain and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time, and he said to Him :

“All these will I give Thee, if falling down Thou wilt adore me.”

This is a bargain worthy of the devil, and such as he makes over and over again with men. He promises what he cannot do and would not do if he could, and the price he asks for his worthless promise is a shameless one—

the price of the soul, for to worship any but God is to sell one's soul to the devil.

Again the answer comes, prompt and decisive: "Begone, Satan! It is written: 'The Lord thy God shalt thou adore and Him only shalt thou serve.'" Then "the devil departed from Him for a time" and angels came and ministered to Him.

"The devil departed." One word from our Lord and he was thrust back into "his own place," his power broken. How contemptible he is!

And our Lord? What shall we say to Him for going first and weakening our enemy? Is He not a champion to follow and to be proud of? "*Now is come salvation and strength, and the Kingdom of God and the power of His Christ*" the angels sang in Heaven, and cannot we on earth say the same—*Salvation and strength and power and the Kingdom of our God*—all come to us through our Lord Jesus Christ.

But perhaps some of us think that of course it was easy for our Lord to overcome, because He was God, and of course it is very hard for us to conquer, because we are only children. Do you know children cannot be tempted until they have the power to resist? The Queen does not send her soldiers without arms to battle. Do you think God is less good? Two

powers come together into the soul—the dreadful power to sin, and the power to conquer. The temptation and the grace are both weighed by our Lord. A nurse when she feeds a child puts the food to her own lips first, to be sure it is not too hot for the little mouth. And so our Master tries every temptation that comes to us for fear it should be too hard, too fierce.

As to *how* we are to overcome—He has shown us how. We have to take our stand manfully on God's side, to ask His light and grace, and then make as short work of the tempter as possible—"Begone, Satan!" the sign of the Cross, holy water, a change of thought—and another defeat will be registered in Heaven, the devil will be cast out, this time by a young child, who has walked in the footsteps of its Master.

XVI.

THE FIRST LOOK AT THE KING.

“Lord, where dwellest Thou?”—JOHN i.

WHEN our Lord descended the mountain of Quarantana, He walked quickly as one eager to get to a journey's end. At the foot of the mountain He took the road leading to the banks of the Jordan, where He had been baptised. What drew Him there? *The multitude*, those men, and women and children gathered together in the wilderness in expectation of a Messiah. He was their King; they were His subjects, prepared by His Ambassador, and He was coming to take possession of their hearts. They did not know Him, but He knew them, knew their needs, their sufferings, their sins; He was coming to pour out upon them His Divine love. Men are slow to believe in love, slow to make use of it, slower still to return it. But the outpouring of our Lord's burning charity will surely melt their hearts. They are suffering, He will heal them; they are tormented by wicked spirits, He will drive them away; they are in trouble about

their sins, He will forgive them; they are ignorant, He will instruct them; they have lost sight of Heaven and spiritual things, He will show them the way there and open their eyes. Every class of men shall find in Him all they need. All He has, as far as He can, He will give them. Some of His divine gifts He will have to hide, lest men should be afraid of Him or ashamed to appear in His presence. But other gifts as divine He will freely use to heal, and soothe, and comfort. The hiding of His gifts and the using come alike from the love of His Sacred Heart.

To be with His subjects always, to be at their service night and day, He has given up His home in Heaven, His home on earth, even His Blessed Mother. Will they come to Him and range themselves under His banner, and serve Him with love and loyalty? Or will they disappoint Him and turn coldly away? We shall see.

Jesus neared the Bethabara ford, and John in the distance saw Him coming. He knew Him at once: "Behold the Lamb of God," he said, "behold Him, Who taketh away the sins of the world!" The cry half sad, half joyful, astonished the disciples who were standing near. They looked up. Lamb! a victim! When we hear of lambs we think

of the white things in the meadows, playing by their mother's side; but the Jews thought of an altar, and a knife, and blood flowing for a sacrifice. So when John pointed to our Lord and said He was the "Lamb of God," they looked sadly at the beautiful Figure coming towards them, and wondered what the words meant.

Jesus passed on into the wilderness, but the next day in the afternoon He came in sight again, and again John cried "Behold the Lamb of God!" Only two chosen souls were standing near. They heard and understood that the Messiah had come. Then and there they left their old master and followed our Lord, gave up the ambassador and followed the King.

Jesus heard footsteps and looked round. "Whom are you seeking?" The abrupt question startled the disciples; they had no answer ready:

"Rabbi, Master, where dwellest Thou?" They could think of nothing else to say.

"Come and see," our Lord answered. The answer was just what they wanted, an invitation to "come and see." They went with Him and stayed with Him that day. The sun was still high in the heavens, and there were the long hours of the night to spend in His company, to listen to Him, to look at Him, to learn from Him. What did those favoured two,

Andrew and John, say to Him? John, who tells us so many wonderful things, has not one word to say of those first few hours with our Lord. The saints have their secrets, as we have ours, and we shall have to wait until we get to Heaven to know what passed between the King and His first disciples.

Andrew had a brother whom he loved tenderly, and to him he told the good news.

"Simon," he said, "we have found the Messiah!" And he brought him to Jesus. Jesus looking upon him said:

"Thou art Simon, son of Jona; thou shalt be called Cephas."

It is very important that we should understand what our Lord meant by these words to His new disciple. Our Lord never said anything that was not full of meaning, and these words are very full of meaning. He changed a name completely—Simon was to be Cephas. With the Jews a change of name meant a change of character or office. The word "Abram" by the alteration of a few letters came to mean "father of a multitude," and God in making this change raised that holy man to be the Patriarch of his family. The Hebrew name Simon means *child of a dove*; the word Cephas means *a rock*. Simon, son

of Jona, was to be no longer weak and feeble, he was to be Cephas (or Peter) strong and steadfast.

No doubt Peter felt proud and happy at having a new name given to him. It was a distinction, a mark of favour, and the new name suited his energetic nature better far than the gentle "Simon." But he little knew what a great dignity it foreshadowed. Perhaps it was well for him that he did not, for he was inclined to be forward, and it took years of our Lord's patient training to bring him into shape.

With His chosen three, Peter, Andrew, and John, our Lord turned towards Galilee. On the road He met another disciple of John's, Philip of Bethsaida.

"Follow Me," Jesus said, with a look that gave the grace to obey. Philip followed Him and joined the happy company in their journey northward.

Now Philip had the heart of an apostle. He longed for his friend Nathaniel to know our Lord, and to find him quickly, hastened on before the rest. Nathaniel was sitting under his favourite fig-tree.

"We have found Him of whom Moses in the Law and the Prophets did write, Jesus, the Son of Joseph, of Nazareth," Philip said, his face beaming with joy. Nathaniel got up and looked at his friend. They had studied the

Scriptures together and had often talked about the promised Messiah, and now Philip said he had found Him of whom Moses and the prophets wrote. No news could have been more welcome to Nathaniel. But the words, "Jesus, the Son of Joseph, of *Nazareth*," did not sound promising.

"Nazareth! Can anything good come from Nazareth?" he said. Philip wasted no words. "Come and see," he answered, and Nathaniel obeyed.

In the plain of Samaria, near the stone Jacob set up in remembrance of his vision of the ladder of light, the friends met our Lord.

Jesus turned to the three by His side and said: "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile."

Nathaniel overheard and asked Him simply: "Whence knowest Thou me?"

"Before Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig-tree, I saw thee."

Saw him before he was in sight; Nathaniel was awed by the words and by the majesty with which they were spoken. Throwing himself on his knees, he said:

"Rabbi, Thou art the Son of God, Thou art the King of Israel!"

Jesus, pleased with his ready faith, quickly promises a reward. "Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig-tree, thou

believest. Greater things than these shalt thou see." And, turning to those who were following Him, He said: "Amen, amen, I say to you, you shall see the heavens opened and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man."

Such was the call of Andrew, and James, of Simon, Philip and Nathaniel. As yet they were only on trial, invited to "come and see" their King and to live with Him awhile. Later, if worthy, they were to be chosen ministers, princes of His kingdom.

XVII.

A ROYAL BOUNTY.

“Thou art a gracious God.”—JONAS iv.

NIGHT is coming on, the sun has sunk in the west and the stars are beginning to shine. The air is still warm and sweet with the breath of flowers. No birds are singing and there is not breeze enough to stir an olive leaf. Look at the little town in front of us. The houses make square patterns on the sky, almost like a Grecian border, the trees resemble huge fans wide spread.

Do you see those lights moving about down there? They shine as brightly as stars, only they cannot be stars, they are too low down. Let us count them—one, two, three, there are ten of them. What can they be? They are lamps, the lamps of the bridesmaids who are watching for the bridegroom. Now we are nearer we can see the young virgins in their brilliant holiday dresses. They are listening intently. Hark! those sounds in the distance are the clash of the tambourine and the shrill note of the flute. The bridal procession is in sight now. How gorgeous it looks! What

glad music! There are the ten young men in flowing robes, there are the musicians singing and playing, and there, last of all, is the bridegroom. Listen to the joyous cry: "Behold, the bridegroom cometh, go ye forth to meet him." His bride is waiting for him; she is dressed in a white and gold-embroidered dress and is veiled from head to foot. He takes her by the hand and leads her into the still night. Back the procession wends to the house of the bridegroom. What a happy company. The virgins with their flickering lamps lead the way, the musicians follow, and the friends, laughing and talking, accompany the happy couple. Let us also go to the marriage, for the Mother of Jesus is there, and Jesus is also invited.

The blessing is said. The guests take their places; the table is laden with good things. The waiters pass busily to and fro. The chief steward of the feast watches all the arrangements; he calls for a goblet for this one, fruit for another, and talks gaily to all. Did you ever see so many bright faces and hear such joyous laughter? Yet what is there about the company that makes it unlike other companies? The guests are so kind to one another, so contented with what they get, and there is a delicacy, a thoughtfulness for others that you do not often see. Jesus is there, and His presence is felt by

all. He is not sad, nor silent. His look never stops a laugh. He puts no check on the flow of talk, but His presence is so holy that it makes a sanctuary even of a marriage-supper room. There is no merriment, but great gladness; no fun, but real joy.

Mary is helping to serve with the other women. Her eye is quick; she sees a want before it is felt and seems to know what people like. Her particular care are the old and the shy; she makes them feel at home and happy, and sees that they have all they need without having to ask for it.

Presently a waiter comes to her with a trouble; he takes her apart and speaks low. Mary looks distressed, the wine is failing, it will scarcely hold out for another round. "Poor bridegroom," she thinks, "I must save him the shame of having to tell his guests he has no wine to give them." She goes to the couch where Jesus is reclining and bends over Him. "They have no wine," she whispers. He looks round at her and says:

"Woman, what is it to Me and to thee? My hour is not yet come."

In English these words sound harsh. In Aramaic, the language our Lord spoke, they are not harsh at all. The Easterns said "woman" where we should say "lady." So it is as if our Lord had said: "Lady, this is no concern of ours, My time for working

miracles is not yet at hand." His hour had not yet come, but because His Mother asked, it came. Once a prophet prayed and the sun went back on its course, and now Mary, the Mother of God prays, and the hour of miracles strikes before its time. No great wonder that, is it?

Calling the waiters together she says to them: "Whatsoever He shall say to you, do ye." They look relieved and promise to obey. There is an instant's pause, then Jesus says:

"Fill the water-pots with water." The water-pots, six large vessels, were standing by the wall. The guests had washed their hands and feet before sitting down to table and the vessels were empty. The men take them one by one to the well and bring them back full to the very brim. Jesus says:

"Draw out now and carry to the chief steward of the feast."

Immediately a waiter takes the first empty goblet that comes to hand and fills it with the sparkling liquor. Wine! The guests look at each other and then at Jesus. He smiles and puts His finger on His lips. They take the goblet to the chief steward and watch his face intently. He drinks. What a flavour! What delicious wine! Holding up the cup, he calls to the bridegroom and tells him laughingly that his secret is found out. Other hosts give their best

wine first, and pass off the less good when men have well drunk ; he has kept his choicest wine till the last. The bridegroom listens astonished. He has no secret ; his wine is poor and ordinary, and he was much afraid it would not hold out. The steward brings the cup to him and he drinks. This is not his wine. Where did it come from ? Who has brought it ? Very eagerly the waiters press forward and tell with glowing faces how they filled the pots to the very brim with pure water from the well and how Jesus, Mary's Son, changed the pure well-water into wine. A great silence falls on the guests ; they look at Jesus and their hearts are filled with awe and love. This must be a great Prophet they think—one who is powerful with God and tenderly compassionate towards men, and with Mary's help they thank Him for His loving kindness.

Why did Jesus work this miracle ? Why ? because His Mother asked Him, because He would bless a holy marriage, because He pitied the bridegroom, because He loves to make men happy.

Another and a higher reason He had also. One day He would work a greater change. The wine itself would be changed. He would change it into His own most Precious Blood and give It to men for the food of their souls. And that day, too, would be a marriage-festival,

a great feast—a union of the Creator with His creature. But He must wait for that day. It was a long way off; in the meantime He would give men a sign. He would draw them to Him by a miracle, that seeing they might believe, so that later they might believe without seeing.

This miracle was the *beginning of signs*, the first miracle that Jesus ever worked. His young disciples were by His side and saw it. Their Master, John, had worked no miracles, and now they recalled his word: *He is greater than I*. This, then, truly was the Messiah, and they glorified God and believed in Jesus.

XVIII.

THE KING IN HIS CAPITAL.

“They have forsaken the Lord, the Holy One of Israel.”—Is. xi.

THE Paschal moon shone upon the land of Judea, looking down upon towns and villages, upon hilltops and white roads, and crowded caravansaries. Weary travellers had sunk to rest. Camels and horses and mules breathed out their tiredness into the night where all was still.

Day broke and there was a great stir. Camels and mules were reladen, horses harnessed, families gathered. In the fresh clear air of early morning processions of men and women and children set out again on the journey southwards. From Tyre on the Phœnecian coast and Sidon there was one long road; from Lake Tiberias through Samaria another; from beyond the Jordan through Perea and by Jericho, a third; and all three were thronged with the thousands on their way to Jerusalem to keep the Passover in the “Sanctuary of the Lord.” Jesus and His little company were on the road that April day, coming up to keep the feast, the first of His public life.

About noon of the fourth day they stood in the Temple. What a scene is before Him! The Court of the Gentiles, a place of prayer for all nations, is turned into a common market-place. There are sellers of incense, oil and flour; there are droves of oxen and flocks of sheep; there are the tables of the money-changers, there are wicker-baskets with captive doves piled up in long rows. And what noise and confusion — trampling, shouting, quarrelling; the cry of children hurt by the cattle or hustled by the rough drivers, the haggling of buyers and sellers, the bellowing of oxen, the bleating of sheep; all sounds there are, except the sound of prayer. And this in Jerusalem, within hearing of the Sanhedrin, whose business it is to see that order is observed.

God is a patient God; Jesus is God and He is patient. For eighteen years He has been coming to the Temple and has seen His Father's house filled with a rabble of money-makers, but His hour was not come. He suffered and was silent. It is His hour now: "Behold, your God will come with vengeance," the prophet had said, and behold He is here. Jesus enters the court. He picks up a cord and twists it into a little scourge. With uplifted arm He drives all before Him. The oxen and sheep, struggling and kicking, break from their

masters and flee towards the doors. The sellers of doves snatch up the cages and slink off at His word : " Take these things hence and make not the House of My Father a house of traffic."

Without a moment's warning, Jesus pours out upon the ground the money of the changers and with a touch of His hand overturns their tables. The coins roll on the pavement, the tables fall with a crash and the changers stagger to their feet too much awed to say a word in self-defence.

Through the thronged enclosure Jesus walks, cleansing the Temple. Of the hundreds there, not one withstands Him ; but of the hundreds there, not one helps Him.

Listen ! Do you hear angry voices ? The sound comes from the covered porch to the east. The Levites, and the High-Priest, and the guardians of the Temple have assembled there to discuss this extraordinary interference.

" Who is the stranger," they ask, " who has dared to upset the Temple arrangements ? Certainly the traffic has become a nuisance, but if we are prepared to put up with it, surely a man from the provinces, a Galilean from Nazareth, has no right to interfere !" One of their number proposes to find the stranger and ask Him what business He has to meddle with their affairs.

"What sign dost Thou show unto us seeing

that Thou dost these things?" they say to Jesus. He sees their angry faces and knows their thoughts. For a less offence than this, they have put men to death. But from the very outset of His career He will show them He does not fear their malice.

"Destroy this Temple," He says, *"and in three days I will raise it up."* The second Temple shall be greater than the first, Aggeus had said; but greater than either was the Temple of which Jesus spoke, the Temple of His Sacred Body. The Jews would destroy it, but after three days He would raise it up, glorious and beautiful. His disciples are standing by and hear the prophecy.

Three years later when it is fulfilled, they remind each other of the Master's words.

But the Jews are too angry to understand Him, and answer scornfully :

"Six and forty years was this Temple in building and wilt Thou raise it up in three days?" Nevertheless the words sink deep into their hearts, and three years later they too recall them and twist them into an accusation against Him. Standing before Pilate they declare :

"We heard Him say, I will destroy this Temple made with hands and within three days I will build another not made with hands." And again when He is nailed to the Cross, dying, they shout out : *"Vah, Thou that destroyest the*

*Temple of God and in three days dost rebuild it !
save Thyself !*"

Jesus dies—the Temple is destroyed ; three days pass ; and He rises glorious and beautiful. —*It is rebuilt* according to His word. And so these enemies of His, these Jews help to fulfil His prophecy.

Was our Lord angry when He took up the scourge and drove out the men and upset the tables ?

Our Lord was angry with the Jews because they had done wrong. They had dishonoured the Temple, which to them was the holiest thing on earth. Oxen and sheep and doves and money-changers were necessary for God's service, but they were not necessary in that holy place. Outside on the hill, in the market-places, at the gates, there was room enough for buying and selling. It was wrong to use the Temple courts for such business, and to fill God's House with noisy disputes. The talking and shouting and quarrelling could be distinctly heard in every part of the building, and the faithful Jews at prayer were disturbed by the noise.

Our Lord was angry, too, because they had profaned the Temple with full knowledge. They knew better than any nation on earth how holy God is. Their Scriptures were full of His holiness. "The Lord our God is holy." Who

is like to Thee among the strong, O Lord? Who is like to Thee, glorious in holiness, terrible and praiseworthy, doing wonders?" They had been taught to fear God rather than to love Him. And in their best days the nation had had a wonderfully strong and holy fear of Him. But those days were past. In our Lord's time the fear of Herod the King, of Cæsar at Rome, or of each other, was greater than their fear of God. Our Lord wanted to bring them back to that holy fear of God without which there is no goodness, no wisdom. This is why He shows Himself angry in the Temple.

But see how gentle He is even when He is angry. The Roman governor, had he wished to make a clearance, would have ordered a general slaughter. He would have mingled the blood of the Israelites with their sacrifices. But Jesus has the "gentleness of one who can do all things." He makes a scourge, but it is a little one, and we are not told He used it; He pours out the money of the changers, but He does not take it from them; He drives out the cattle, but does not hurt them. *Take these things hence* are not hard words. He could not have said less to those who were doing such grievous wrong. He did not want to be angry with them. He only wanted them to see that they were profaning the holy place—God's Sanctuary.

For seven days He remains in Jerusalem, preaching and instructing the multitude. Long before His coming a prayer went up to God from His people : *Fill Sion with Thy unspeakable words, and Thy people with glory.* See how God has heard that prayer. He has sent His Son to fill Jerusalem with His *unspeakable words*, and the people, if they will, *with glory*. How does Jerusalem, *His Sanctuary*, receive Him? Does it open wide its gates and welcome Him with joy? Do the learned men who live in the holy city throng round Him, listen to Him eagerly, ask Him questions, get Him to settle their doubts and difficulties? Come and see.

Jesus is teaching in the Temple, and the crowds gather round ; the little ones form an inner circle as near to Him as they can get. Next to them come the sick, the blind, and the lame. These He heals, and they praise His power ; they hang on His words, and are never tired of listening. But behind stand stern men, with arms folded, heads erect, and eyes fixed, now on Jesus, now on the crowd. They, too, listen to His words, they see His miracles, but the hard expression of their faces does not change. They are the Pharisees and Scribes and Ancients, watching to see what effect the words of Jesus have upon the multitude. Perhaps He is one like John the Baptist, who will

attract the people to Himself, and who will dare even to openly condemn them, as John had done. They must let the people know that they are the masters in Jerusalem, and that those who side with Jesus need expect no favour with them.

The people learn their lesson quickly enough. They know their masters, and dare not defy them. They are attracted by our Lord's gracious ways; they love His teaching, and wonder at His miracles; but they fear to disobey the Ancients, lest they should be turned out of the synagogues—excommunicated even. So they come to our Lord—they cannot keep away from Him—but their hearts are not wholly with Him. They are trying to serve two masters, and they cannot manage it. Later they will have to make a choice, and they will make it, but it will be a bad one.

And of the rulers themselves, are none attracted to our Lord? Is there not one to set a good example to the people?

Not one. Nicodemus, one of the Sanhedrim-councillors, has found out that our Lord is a great Teacher, one sent from God, but as for setting a good example to the people, he has not courage for that. He has to be mindful of his reputation. It must not be said that one of the Sanhedrim has been won over to the Galilean Teacher, and has become a disciple.

And yet this was the case. Nicodemus longed to hear more about Him. He longed to ask Him questions, to open his heart to Him. But in the crowd he could not speak ; with those cruel dark faces around he dared not tell his trouble.

So he went to our Blessed Lord at night and opened his soul to Him. Jesus knew his faint-heartedness, yet He did not upbraid him, nor send him away. He knew the hour would come when that weak soul would be His. He received him kindly, instructed him, and won his heart. When morning dawned Nicodemus left his new Master and went home firmly believing Him to be the Messiah. But he kept his belief to himself. To his friends he appeared as one of those who had nothing to do with the new Prophet from Nazareth. Jesus waited, still Nicodemus kept away. He saw our Lord in the distance, heard Him speak to the crowds, but he did not join himself to them. Once at a council he spoke in our Lord's favour, but he was silenced and sat down crushed. Jesus was condemned and was crucified, and died. Then at last the faint-hearted-follower took courage and declared himself a disciple. The words said that night two years before came back to his mind : *As Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so must the Son of Man be lifted up.* He had

seen the Son of Man, the Master he loved, lifted up, *a worm and no man*, and love drove out fear. With his friend Joseph of Arimathea he brought spices to embalm the Body of his Lord.

Think of the sorrow in our Lord's Heart as He turned away from Jerusalem that Passover. The few disciples He brought to the city were still at His side, but for the rest of that great multitude there was hardly one with Him. John, the Evangelist, says : *Jesus did not trust Himself unto them, for that He knew all men . . . He knew what was in man*. What an awful reproach ! *because* He knew all men, and what was in man, He did not trust Himself to them. Slowly and very sadly He left Jerusalem and turned once more to the south-east of Judea, to the land where John had been preaching.

It was a rugged land, as we have seen ; there were rocky mountains, deep ravines, gurgling brooks, and scanty pasture. Perched here and there on hilltops were hamlets ; villages crept up the hillsides. The people were poor and very simple, mostly shepherds and hardy mountaineers. But they had listened to the Baptist's preaching, they had been gathered together on the Jordan's banks and had heard him preach Jesus of Nazareth. He was the Messiah, he told them, and soon would stand in their midst. The promise had made them

eager. When we expect a friend, we watch every turn of the road he is coming by. So did they watch for the Messiah's coming. At last He came and the news flew from hamlet to hamlet, from hillside to hillside. From all parts the country-folk assembled and crowded round Jesus as they had crowded round John. They looked into His face and listened to His winning words. John had instructed, Jesus enlightened them. John had filled them with eager longing, Jesus satisfied them. They were happy with Him and He was happy with them. Spring passed away, and still He lingered in their midst. The summer months went by, and autumn, with its harvesting-time, came. The grapes were gathered, the olives pressed, the corn was cut. Still Jesus found a work to do amongst them.

For they were eager to learn and docile to teach, and their souls were ripe as the grapes, and the olives, and standing corn. So Jesus reaped His harvest of souls amongst the humble cottagers of Judea, and when the cold winter winds blew and the sun was low in the heavens He bid them good-bye, and turned with His chosen ones towards Galilee, His own beloved land.

The little company took the road through Samaria, Jesus knew why.

XIX.

THE KING AMONG STRANGERS.

“I have set Thee to be the Light of the Gentiles.”—
Is. xlix.

WHAT a tender place a deformed or crippled child holds in its mother's heart, what allowances she makes for its waywardness, and how lovingly she smoothes difficulties out of its path!

Now there was in God's land of Judea a nation that was like a deformed child in His sight. Indeed, it would be more true to say it was a stranger child altogether, not one of the family at all. It was crooked, too, and sickly, helpless and infirm, but our Lord loved it. He would have no one harm it or say a word against it, and when He could He spoke well of it. One day, when His apostles wanted to call down God's vengeance for its unkindness to Him, He stayed their arm and forbade them.

That stranger child was the Samaritan nation.

To make you understand something of its history we must go back nearly 1,000 years, nearly to Solomon's reign.

When Roboam, his son, was on the throne, there broke out amongst the Jews a schism, that is, a rending of a nation. Two only of the twelve tribes remained faithful to the King; the other ten rebelled and forsook him, and after a short and wicked career were taken captives by an Assyrian King and led into a far distant country, hundreds of miles from their own home.

For many years the land they had left was desolate, with none to till the ground, none to mind the flocks. But at last a King of Assyria chose out some of the neighbouring nations and sent them to people this part of Palestine, which came to be called Samaria. The newcomers were idolaters. They worshipped horrible gods and did evil in God's sight. Little by little, however, they learned to know the true God, left off some of their wicked practices, and even adopted, in part, the Mosaic law.

But their neighbours, the Jews of Judea, were harsh and proud and stood aloof from them. When these Judeans were rebuilding their Temple in Jerusalem the Samaritans humbly begged to help, saying: "Let us build with you, for we seek your God as you do. Behold, we have sacrificed to Him." The Jews answered coldly: "You have nothing to do with us to build a house to our God, but we ourselves alone will build to the Lord our God."

This insult set the two nations against each other for ever, and a fearful hatred sprang up between them. The Jews cursed the Samaritans, and the Samaritans waylaid and even murdered the Jews. They built for themselves a Temple on Mount Garizim, and there they adored God and worshipped idols.

Such was the state of the two nations when Jesus was on earth. He did not join His nation in despising the poor, half-taught Samaritans. He had come to save all men, and sinners and outcasts seemed to attract Him in some special way. He had come to seek and to find; what was lost therefore belonged to Him by special right, and Samaria, the outcast nation, was lost indeed. This is why He passed through it one day.

The journey had been long and tiring, and Jesus was weary. All along the road He had been instructing His disciples and cheering them, and when at last Jacob's well came in sight He sank down upon the stone edge to rest. His disciples looked at Him and saw by the drops of perspiration standing on His forehead and the hands quietly folded on His knees that He was too tired to go further.

"Remain, Lord, and rest," they said, "whilst we go into the nearest village to buy food for Thee and for us." They went and Jesus

remained behind. But not to rest. A tall slight figure in the distance is coming His way. It is a Samaritan woman carrying a pitcher. Her head was almost uncovered, her step was quick and light, and her dark eyes roamed from side to side. She made straight for the well and silently lowered her pitcher. The fresh water bubbled up, cool and sparkling, and she placed it, dripping, on the stone. Jesus turned to her.

"Give Me to drink," He said. The woman answered in amazement :

"How dost Thou, being a Jew, ask of me to drink, who am a Samaritan woman." It was an ungracious answer, but Jesus excused it. He used to excuse whenever He could. They do not know what they are doing, He used to say. "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do." To the Samaritan His answer was : "*If thou didst know* the gift of God and Who He is that saith to thee, 'Give Me to drink,' thou perhaps wouldst have asked of Him and He would have given thee living water." But she did not not know, and so she was not to be blamed.

Water! she thought. How could He give her water when He had not been able to get any even for Himself.

"Sir, Thou hast nothing wherein to draw, and the well is deep ; from whence, then, hast

Thou living water? Art Thou greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle?"

She had not understood, so our Lord in simple words told her that the water He gives is not like the water of this world. His is life-giving, taking away all thirst for the things of earth, and lasting in its efforts even to life everlasting. The woman was pleased:

"Give me of this water," she said. But she was not yet fit to receive it. She was a sinner who had broken God's commandments and had not repented. With great gentleness our Lord told her of her hidden sins; He humbled her that He might make her sorry. She listened wonderstruck. All her sins were known; all, whatsoever she had done, was brought up before her. And she acknowledged it all, it was all true. "Thou art a prophet," she answered, and with bowed head, listened reverently to our Lord's words. When He had finished speaking she said:

"I know that the Messiah cometh; therefore when He is come He will tell us all things." By all things, she meant all that our Lord had been telling her and which were above her understanding. Our Lord was touched. This poor woman longed for the Messiah to come that she might know how to worship God as she ought.

I am He Who am speaking with thee, He said ; and with the words a great light flooded her soul.

The disciples had been away more than an hour and the sun was dropping down into the west. Great was their astonishment when, on nearing the well, they saw our Lord and the Samaritan woman. Was He really talking to her, really breaking through the strict Jewish custom of shunning these strangers ? Yet not one of them dared to ask, " Why talkest Thou with her ? " They felt He must know best ; His thoughts were not as their thoughts.

As they approached, the Samaritan turned to go, but thoughtfully left her vessel near to Jesus. She would give Him to drink now, give Him all she had. With great haste she returned to the city of Sichem. Meeting her acquaintances, she told them of her conversation, " Come and see a Man Who has told me all things whatsoever I have done. Is not He the Christ ? A crowd gathered about her, and telling them all she could remember of the wonderful meeting, and picturing to them the majesty of the Master, she led them out of the city towards Jacob's well.

Meanwhile the disciples, hungry and thirsty, gathered round our Lord ; one uncovered the food, another gave it to our Lord to break. Jesus took His portion, but did not eat. The disciples looked at Him :

“ Rabbi, eat ; ” they said persuasively.

“ I have meat to eat which you know not of,” was the answer. Astonished, they looked at one another.

“ Hath any man brought Him to eat ? ” they asked. You can guess what His *meat* was. Not food such as they brought, not water from Jacob’s well, but the joy that one conversion brings. There are many things that take away our appetite—temper takes it away sometimes ; we are too cross to eat ; excitement often takes it away, so does a great joy. Jesus was like us. The joy for a soul converted supplied the need for food. It strengthened Him, satisfied Him, made Him feel able to go on with His journey.

As they were yet speaking, the Samaritans came in sight, their white robes glistened in the sun. Jesus saw them and knew that all of those souls were to be His. Turning to His disciples He said :

“ Do not you say, there are yet four months, and then the harvest cometh ? Behold I say to you, lift up your eyes, and see the countries, for they are white already to the harvest.”

A harvest of souls, and where was it reaped ? In Jerusalem, in Judea, in Galilee ? No, in the waste field of Samaria, amongst a race that was shunned as lepers. How little men understand each other ! How dangerous it is to judge !

Our Lord and His little band went into

Sichem, accompanied by the Samaritans, and He instructed the people, and many, very many believed in Him. They begged Him to stay amongst them, and He stayed two days. As they watched Him going, they said to the penitent sinner, who had been God's messenger to them :

"We know that this is indeed the Saviour of the world."

Is not this a beautiful story? Jesus was not safe in Jerusalem, but in Samaria He was recognised and acknowledged to be the Saviour, the Christ.

We are not told how the disciples took to their new brethren, whether they got over their prejudice generously and received them as equals. But this we know, that years after, when their Master had left them, they followed His example and "preached the gospel to many countries of the Samaritans."

XX.

IN THE KING'S CITY.

“My delights are to be with the children of men.”—
PROVERBS viii.

CAPHARNAUM! What a busy town and what a babel of tongues! Refined Greeks and courtly Romans; Jews of Galilee with their guttural pronunciation and uncouth manners; Jews from the south, milder in accent and bearing; soldiers in Roman dress but half-barbarian in look and gesture—all these were found in Capharnaum. The town stood in the most populous part of Galilee and was a thriving centre of trade. Caravans from Damascus poured in with their merchandise of silks and fine linen. From Jerusalem, through Jericho, Scythopolis, Tiberias, and the southern cities of the lake came traders, travellers, soldiers, prisoners, fishermen who navigated their small craft on the lake, and strangers from the dominions of Herod Philip. And these people came not merely to pass through as travellers nowadays pass through a town, like luggage vans, shot in at one end of the station and shot out at the other, but they came, as a rule, to stay, at

least a while, either for rest or pleasure or business.

Close to the shore stood the booths of the custom-house officers, the hated "publicans." The market-place teemed with fruit and vegetable vendors, sellers of wine and spices, and cattle-dealers. The bazaars were shops for the sale of rich materials, furniture, household utensils, toys and tools.

The synagogue, a large building, stood out conspicuous among the other houses. It was built by one of Herod's centurions, an upright man who revered the Jewish religion. He had spared neither money nor pains to make the building worthy of its object. Over the door was a lintel on which were carved a pot of manna and a creeping vine. Let us pass inside and examine this house of prayer.

It is a long hall with a nave divided into two parts by a balustrade; the seats for the men range on either side, and at the northern end is a gallery for the women. Before a drawn curtain at the southern end burns a lamp in honour of the sacred rolls of Scripture which are kept with great reverence in a wooden box or ark. These rolls are handed out to the preacher by the Chazzan, or caretaker, and portions of them are read to the people at stated times.

Every Sabbath-day the Jews assemble in their synagogues to receive instruction in the Law and the Prophets. But much more than prayer was carried on. They served as courts of law where sentence was passed and criminals were punished, as schools for children, and libraries for men. Every town of importance had at least one synagogue; in Jerusalem there were four hundred and eighty.

This is the city our Lord made *His own*. What is there about it that attracted Him? The multitude, the hundreds of workers, the pleasure-seekers, the publicans and sinners, the neglected little children, and the boys and girls growing up amidst evil. "He had compassion on the multitude." Here, in the very midst of trade and traffic, pleasure and pain, ease and luxury, He will make His headquarters. Here He will be able to reach the greatest numbers, show His tenderness towards all classes, all nations, all ages.

But what about Nazareth? Is not Nazareth His city? Has our Lord forgotten the home of His childhood? Our Lord forgets nothing. He has been to Nazareth, He has taught in its synagogue, and has been cast out of the city, taken to the top of a hill and all but thrown from the overhanging cliff. Not Nazareth, but Capharnaum, is to be *His own city*.

It is a Sabbath-day. And there is a hush

everywhere. The market-place, the wharfs, the bazaars are forsaken ; the custom-houses are shut, empty boats rock idly on the lake, the fishermen's nets lie dry on the beach. Can this be the busy town of yesterday, and those the same work-a-day people that passed so hurriedly along? Yes, but there is no work to-day. God in the Law had ordered the Sabbath to be strictly kept, and the Pharisees have added such a multitude of minute injunctions that few dare do even the most necessary work of charity on the day of rest. See, all have on their best robes, the spotless white upper garment and coloured cloak, sandals and head-veil. Even the very poor keep one Sabbath garment carefully put away all the week, to come out fresh and clean for the Lord's Day.

Where are these well-dressed eager people going to? To the synagogue to hear a new Rabbi preach, we are told. He is a wonder-worker and highly gifted by nature. His eloquence is astonishing and so is His courage. He has dared to confront the Pharisees at Jerusalem. But this is added in a whisper, for even in Capharnaum the Pharisees are feared.

The synagogue is full to overflowing, but not a sound is heard. The best seats at the upper end are all taken by the rich and respectable. Amongst them we recognise the thoughtful face

of the ruler whose son our Lord cured not long ago ; the centurion is there too, brought by his friends to hear the great preacher. Down there in the nave stands Zebedee, whose two sons have followed our Lord. Near to him is Alpheus, father of that Simon and Andrew who heard the " Follow me " on the beach and left all, and followed Him. Very near the door and in the shadow cast by a column, stands Levi, the publican. His call has not yet come, but his whole heart is the Master's. Almost out of sight in the women's gallery is one we know and love—Mary, the Mother of Jesus. Her sweet face has hardly lost the look of pain that our Lord's rejection from Nazareth left upon it.

Jesus is sitting in the preacher's chair almost in the midst of the people, but slightly raised above them. There is a hush, a silence that is almost awful. His eye penetrates to the furthest corner of the hall, each one feels singled out, known, loved. He speaks. Clear and sweet is His voice, and His words bring comfort. Tears flow down the cheeks of hardened sinners, and hearts that have never known contrition sob out their sorrow.

A shriek ! What was that ? another and another—then a trampling of feet, orders given and promptly carried out. It is a poor man

possessed by the devil, who has broken out into one of his fits of frenzy. Hark to the horrible words the wicked spirit makes him say : " Let us alone ; what have we to do with Thee, Jesus of Nazareth ? Art Thou come to destroy us ? I know Thee, Who Thou art, the Holy One of God."

Jesus stands calm and peaceful in the presence of His miserable enemy. The people have shrunk together and have left an open space round the demoniac.

" Hold thy peace and go out of him," Jesus says. The devil hears and obeys, but obeys like a devil. He throws him into the midst ; teasing him, and crying with a loud voice, he goes out of him. What a pretence of power ! " teasing " and " crying," " throwing him " to a distance, and yet not able to leave so much as a scar on his victim's body : "*he hurt him not at all.*" The people in the synagogue " are all amazed, and fear, so that they questioned among themselves saying : " What thing is this ? What is this new doctrine ? for with power, He commandeth even the unclean spirits, and they obey Him."

It was noon and Jesus broke up the assembly. He was to be Peter's guest at the mid day meal, so with John and Andrew and James He left the synagogue and went with Peter home. On Sabbath-days, a great display was made at

dinner—the savings of the week were often ungrudgingly spent in good things to eat on the holy day. But, on this occasion there was little comfort in Simon's house. His wife's mother "was taken with a great fever;" and they besought our Lord to have compassion on her. As a matter of course He made His way straight to the sick-bed. The sufferer watched Him come near. How beautiful He is, she thought, and how kind to come to her when all were waiting for the meal. But He wanted her to be of the party. He could not bear to sit at table and leave her there burning with fever, with her parched lips unmoistened and her dry hands twitching. Bending over the low bed He took her hand, ordered the fever to leave her, and gently raised her up.

Jesus took His place at table and, to the astonishment of all, the mistress of the house joined her guests "and ministered unto them." What a happy feast that was. The old mother set up with new life; Peter, aglow with gratitude; Andrew and John and James looking with admiration at their Master

The afternoon wore away and the news of the miracle spread through the town. Oh, the hopes that were raised in the hearts of the sick and of those that loved them! When the sun set below the western hills, they would take

their sick to Simon's house and lay them before the Master. But would He hear the strangers, those who were nothing to Him? They could but see. How long the afternoon seemed. Would the sun never go down? It was the Sabbath, and before sunset they dared not carry burdens. At last the hour came, and from almost every house in Capharnaum, from the mansions of the rich, from the hovels of the poor, from the suburbs, the diseased, the possessed, the lame, the palsied were carried out. What a procession! Down the narrow street it wound, stopping before the door of Simon's house where the burdens were laid down.

Jesus stood on the threshold. Around Him were His disciples and they looked on the sickening sight. What would He do? Would He tell the people kindly that He had not come as a physician, that His work was with souls, and that as for the ills of the body they must bear them as well as they could; that their sufferings were deserved, and therefore could scarcely be taken away? or would He tell them that He will gladly heal them at certain times and places, but that He cannot have His friends' houses besieged in this way; they must bide His time and wait till He gave them notice.

Oh, no! One by one, with the gentle touch of a mother, He laid His hand on the sufferers, and they rose up healed. Not in a crowd, not

in groups, but one by one He healed them. They felt His touch, they understood that they were separately loved by Him. Think of the joy of the possessed, loosened from the chains of the devil ; of the blind, looking for the first time on the beautiful face of their Creator ; of the crippled, leaping in exultation. Far into the night Jesus worked ; as long as there was one left unhealed He would not go to rest. But at last they had all gone home, and Peter begged Him to lie down for a while. The house was quiet, and all slept.

"Very early," and noiselessly, for fear of awakening His tired hosts, Jesus opened the door and took a westward turn into a desert place. The morning was grey, the sun below the horizon, and He was alone with His Father. The early hours passed, the sun rose, and Peter found out His Master's absence. Without delay he went in search of Him, and, meeting Him coming down the mountain, said in his abrupt way : "All seek Thee." The multitude was even then coming up in quest of Him, and much relieved they were at seeing Him. They begged and implored Him to stay amongst them. But Jesus turned to His disciples and said : "Let us go into the neighbouring towns and cities, that I may preach there also the Kingdom of God, for to this purpose am I come." His manner was decided ; the most

eager dared say no more. They watched Him go, and their blessings went with Him.

If our Lord showed His love to the Jews by healing their sick, why, if He loves us, does He not heal our sick also? Perhaps the answer is that for us there is better comfort than health. To us He can show His thorn-crowned head, His hands pierced, His side torn. He can point to the marks of the scourges, and tell us that : " He was wounded for our iniquities, He was bruised for our sins." (Is. liii.) But to the Jews He could not speak of His sufferings. They saw Him full of life and beauty. No scar had marred His features, no lash had torn His flesh. He could not say to them : " Suffer *with Me*, bear your pain as you have seen Me bear mine." He did once say : " Take up your Cross and follow Me," but they did not understand. He had to give them a comfort they could understand, even though it was less spiritual, less noble, than He offers to His Christian followers. Can we, then, envy the Jews their consolation, comfort, and ease from pain when we know He was *wounded* and *bruised* for our sins?

We have spent one whole day with the King, and have watched Him work, and preach, and console. Now we see Him set out on His first circuit through the whole of Galilee. Weeks

of toil lie before Him. In each little hamlet, in each village, in large towns, He worked His miracles with the same love and compassion as at Capharnaum—preached with the same power and persuasiveness, and drew to Him the hearts of all. How weary those sacred feet must have been! how tired those healing hands! Yet never did He rest, never was He silent, when there was suffering to be soothed or ignorance to be instructed.

THE MIRACULOUS DRAUGHT.

Jesus made His first stay in His missionary journey at Bethsaida, the home of John and James, of Simon and Andrew. These four fishermen had been out on the lake all night. It had been rough and stormy and they had caught nothing. Times without number they had let down their nets, now into deep and now into shallow water, but not a fish had they taken. Weary and disappointed, they gave up the attempt, landed their nets and washed and mended them. Jesus, followed by the multitude, came down to the beach. Taking no notice of the disciples' disappointed looks, He said :

“Lend me your boat, Simon ; the people press down upon each other, they will hear me better if I speak from the boat.” Up jumped

Simon, moored his boat fast, helped our Lord in and settled himself beside Him. All thought of the night's discomfort passed from his mind in the joy at being in our Lord's company. He listened breathlessly to every word his Master spoke. At length Jesus turned to Peter and said:

"Launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a draught."

It is a little hard for those who know nothing about fishing to understand how full of simple trust was Simon's answer:

"Master, we have laboured all the night and have taken nothing, but at Thy word I will let down the net." The sun was high in the heavens and it made the face of the lake one glittering golden mirror. Deep down into the clear water the rays penetrated. Was it likely that the fish, the wary carp, and perch, and bream, would allow themselves to be decoyed into a coarse meshed net in the bright sunlight when they had skilfully evaded it in the dark? Still, not a moment did Peter and his brother hesitate. The boat was unmoored, swung round, and steered for the open sea, and the net was dropped. What made it so heavy? They pulled the ropes, raised the net over the ship's side and, to their amazement, saw that it was breaking with the weight of the fish.

For a moment Peter's instinct as a fisherman

got the better of his surprise. Beckoning to his partners, James and John, in the ship close by, he set to work, and with their help secured the booty. Haul after haul was shipped, till the two boats were almost sinking. Then came a moment's pause, and Peter, seeing the mass of silvery, struggling fish, realised that a miracle had been worked. His skill and craft had failed the whole night through, but one word from our Lord had filled the boat to sinking. Fear took possession of him, and falling on his knees, he cried out, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!" It was not our Lord's power, nor His majesty that overawed Peter. It was His *holiness*—"Depart for I am a *sinful* man."

Such are not the dispositions to make our Lord depart. "Fear not," Jesus answered, "from henceforth thou shalt catch men."

John and James were standing silently by whilst Peter spoke. Jesus had invited them before to come and see; they had come and seen and now freely and deliberately they chose Him for their Master: "leaving all things they followed Him."

XXI.

DEEDS OF POWER.

“The Lord thy God is mighty.”—SOPH. iii.

“AMEN, I say to you, I have not found so great faith in Israel!”

It was our Lord who spoke, marvelling. Before Him stood a Roman centurion. His polished breast-plate shone in the sun, his strong hands were clasped, and his head was bowed. The words : “Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldst enter under my roof, but only say the word, and my servant shall be healed,” had just passed his lips. He was not worthy, he thought, because he was a pagan, one whom the Jews called unclean, whose house even could not be entered without defilement. He knew his sins, they were many, and he deserved to be an outcast. But, if he was unworthy, our Lord was merciful and good. His word could do all things, cure the sick, even if like his poor servant, they were at death’s door. No need for Him to come and stand by the bed, no need even to cross the threshold. From where He stood let Him say but *one word*.

Brightly his breast-plate glistened in the sun, but far more brightly glistened that beautiful soul in the eyes of his Creator. Tender and compassionate towards his sick servant, a slave whom his nation would have sold with old cattle or rusty iron, humble when the haughty overbearing of a Roman was proverbial, full of faith in the Messiah, when the Jews of His own nation were full of doubt and unbelief—this was the centurion whom Jesus praised: “Amen, I say to you, I have not found so great faith in Israel.”

“Go,” Jesus said to him, “and as thou hast believed, so be it done to thee;” and his servant was healed at the same hour. They parted, Jesus and the centurion. Perhaps they often met afterwards, or perhaps the soldier moved with his company to headquarters at Cesarea. But whether he stayed in Capernaum, or whether he went into a pagan city, we may be sure he spread his faith in our Lord amongst his own household, his soldiers, and his friends. The gospel tells us no more of him, but his words are treasured by the Church, and repeated hundreds of times a day by her priests, when they present to the people that Lord who marvelled at the centurion’s humble faith and healed his servant with a word from His sacred lips.

NAIN.

Our Lord did not stay long in Capharnaum. With a multitude of followers, many of whom had been with Him on the Mount, He set out westward to Nain, a journey of about twenty-five miles. There were two there dead—one to his mother, one to God. Neither could live again without the merciful touch of their Saviour.

Nain, "the beautiful," is a little city of Galilee perched on a hill in the plain of Esdraelon. As our Lord entered the town, a sad procession passed Him by. A young man, the only son of a widowed mother, was being carried to the grave. Out at the city gates and down the hillside to the cemetery below, the long file moved. Jesus watched. A multitude was always dear to Him. He loved them, not as a crowd, but as individual souls. To-day He is watching for one in particular, the one whose heart is saddest. The hired wailers, women with their long hair flowing, and the musicians with their melancholy flutes He let go by. Last there came, borne on the shoulders of friends, the bier, on which lay with uncovered face, and hands clasped on the breast, the body of a young man. Near, very near, walked his mother, her pale face telling of anxious days and sleepless nights, her swollen eyes and falling tears telling her bitter sorrow.

He was dead, her only child, the joy of her life, the support of her old age. She was passing Jesus by, but moved with pity, He stayed her, saying: "Weep not." What was there in the words and in the sound of the voice that stopped those gushing tears? Why did hope come back to her mother's heart, even within sight of the bier? Jesus came forward and stretching out His hand brought the men who carried it to a stand-still. The multitude on in front stopped short and looked back, the wailing ceased, the flutes were silenced, the multitude with our Lord waited, wondering.

"Young man," He said, "I say to thee arise!" Like a child aroused from sleep the young man "sat up and began to speak." "Jesus gave him to his mother." "And there came a fear on them all; and they glorified God, saying, 'a great prophet is risen up among us, and God hath visited His people.' And this rumour of Him went forth throughout all Judea, and throughout all the country round about."

MAGDALEN.

One of those who had seen the miracle was the sinner of Magdala, a beautiful but wicked woman, whose life was a disgrace, whose name was a reproach. She was rich and gay, and fond of pleasure. She walked the streets of

Nain adorned with precious stones, robed in silken garments, perfumed with ointments. Her beautiful head was flung back, her bold gaze rested on every passer-by. There was pride in every glance, vanity in every movement. All knew her for what she was—*the* sinner. The Pharisees moved scornfully out of her way; such a creature must not come within an arm's length of them and their good name. The good pitied and prayed for her. With worthless companions she was at home, and in excitement and pleasure she tried to drown the remorse that gnawed her heart.

One day she entered a synagogue—not to pray, not to learn, but to see and to be seen. Taking her place on a seat prepared for the upper classes, she noticed an unusual hush in the building, and for once felt ashamed of the rustling of her silken robes and the blaze of her jewels. But not one curious look was turned upon her. According to her custom Mary Magdalen raised her eyes to the Speaker's Face, but so awful was the majesty of the look which met hers that she bowed her head in conscience-stricken shame. Jesus had been praying to His Heavenly Father. Now, with hands stretched out towards the people, He was inviting them to come to Him :

“Come to Me, all you that labour and are burdened, and I will refresh you. Take up My

yoke upon you, and learn of Me, because I am meek and humble of heart, and you shall find rest for your souls. For My yoke is sweet, and my burden light."

Oh, the sweetness of the voice, the compassionate love of the words! They pierced her conscience, and they touched her heart. *Burdened!* Who so burdened as a sin-laden soul? *Rest!* Where could such a passionate heart find rest? With Him, He said. Was He God, then, Who could forgive sins? For it was sin that weighed her down—sin that made her wretched. Out into the open air Mary went, away from the close streets, away from men, repeating the words over and over again: "Come to Me! My yoke is sweet, My burden light!"

This was Mary's hour of grace. She fought a good fight, and conquered; but the fight was fierce. The devil never lets go one of his own without a battle. Now he tortured Mary's memory with the number of her sins, their enormity, their publicity. How could she ever retrace her steps, get back her good name, begin a new life? And he mocked her with the scorn she would meet with from the so-called good, the ridicule her late companions would heap upon her. But the words of Jesus were louder and stronger than the voice of the tempter "Come to Me."

There was in Nain a rich Pharisee, named Simon, who heard of our Lord's fame. His acquaintances had often asked him if he knew Jesus of Nazareth. So he determined to invite the young Rabbi to a banquet he was about to give to his friends. Of course he could not receive Him as an equal, etiquette must be attended to, but it would be pleasing to his guests to see the far-famed Preacher.

Jesus accepted the invitation, not for Simon's sake, but for the sake of one who was a sinner. He took His place at the lowest end of the tables and sat down with the humbler guests.

Presently through the wide open door came Mary Magdalen, with downcast eyes, robes simple and modest, and a veil covering her beautiful head. In her arms she carried a vase of precious ointment. People looked at her inquiringly. What had come over her who was known in the city as "the sinner?" Why had she loosened her hair as one in sorrow? Why was her face so pale, why were her cheeks wet with tears?

She walked straight to the couch where Jesus lay, and throwing herself on her knees in an agony of sorrow, kissed His feet, watered them with her burning tears, and wiped them with her hair. Then breaking her alabaster vase she poured out the rich ointment upon Him. She knew that cruel eyes were upon her; she

knew that she had no business in the house of a Pharisee ; she knew she was an outcast, a bye-word in the towns of Galilee, but Mary cared little for this now. All she wanted was a word of pardon from Him who said, "Come to me all you that labour and are heavily burdened."

Simon looked on from his upper seat, and sneeringly thought how easily the so-called prophet had been taken in. If He were a prophet would He not know how wicked was the creature who knelt at His feet. Shame it was that she had dared to darken his door ; but for the people about, he would have her turned out like a dog.

Jesus saw the thoughts passing through the righteous man's mind, rash, uncharitable judgments, each and all of them, and all unjust, as rash judgments always are. Not even in thought shall the poor penitent be wronged.

"Simon," our Lord said, "I have something to say to thee." It almost seems as if He were asking to be allowed to speak. Simon's answer was condescending, a permission given in a tone of command.

"Master, say it."

"A certain creditor had two debtors ; the one owed five hundred pence and the other fifty. And whereas they had not wherewith to

pay, he forgave them both. Which, therefore, of the two loveth Him most?"

It was a childish question Simon thought, and he answered it in an impatient off-hand manner:

"I suppose that he to whom he forgave most."

"Thou has judged rightly," Jesus answered. And turning to the penitent Magdalen, He added:

"Simon, dost thou see this woman? I entered into thy house, thou gavest Me no water for my feet; but she with tears hath washed My feet, and with her hairs hath wiped them. Thou gavest Me no kiss; but she, since she came in, hath not ceased to kiss My feet. My head with oil thou didst not anoint; but she with ointment hath anointed My feet. Wherefore I say to thee: Many sins are forgiven her, because she hath loved much. But to whom less is forgiven, he loveth less."

To the woman He said: "Thy sins are forgiven thee. Thy faith hath made thee safe, go in peace."

What a model for penitent sinners is Mary Magdalen! She confessed her sinfulness before men and before Him at Whose feet she knelt. The burning tears that blistered her face told of her contrition, the *breaking of her heart*. The change in her dress, in her movements, in

the bearing of her head, spoke her purpose of amendment. But what of her penance? Was Magdalen to make no satisfaction for a life of sin? Not one word does our Lord say about penance. She had braved the heartless gaze of proud men. She had passed down the streets as a penitent, with falling hair and mourning dress. Could He give her another penance? Only the gentle words: "Go in peace, thou art safe," came from those Divine lips.

But Magdalen did do penance. There was kept for her a place at the foot of the Cross, where with Mary the Mother of God, she watched the three hours' agony. Such penance was only done by Mary, the sinless one, John the beloved disciple, and Magdalen the penitent.

XXII.

THE KING'S ENEMIES.

“It is not easy to fight against God.”—ECCLES. xlv.

WE have now reached the second Passover of our Lord's public life. This time last year He left His Blessed Mother, fasted in the mountain, and was baptized by John in the Jordan. Ever since then He has been teaching, healing, and consoling. For eight months He dwelt in Judea amongst the rough shepherds, mountaineers and country-folk of that wild district, gathering in the harvest His cousin John had sowed for Him. The other four months He spent in Galilee, making circuits through its towns and hamlets and attracting to Him the simple and the suffering. Now again He pays His annual visit to Jerusalem for His second Passover ; and because He is in the Holy City and suffers much from the enmity of the rulers and ancients, we will get to know who these enemies of His are and where they are to be found.

Within the Temple enclosure and touching

the holy building was a large hall called Gazzith, a magnificent room with rich divan-like seats ranged in a grand half-circle round the middle of the open space. There the elders, priests and scribes, who formed the great Jewish Council, called the Sanhedrim, assembled to talk over important matters of state.

It must have been an imposing sight to see those seventy grave men enter with flowing robes and majestic step and take their places, thirty-five to the right, thirty-five to the left of the president's chair. Not one among them was under thirty; all were married, "fathers of children, that so they might show compassion;" all, the regulations tell us, "were men of good report."

The business of the Sanhedrim was to see that the Law of Moses and all Jewish observances were faithfully kept, to punish people who taught false doctrines, or who committed any crime, to preserve peace and order in turbulent times. These were no easy duties and required wise heads and firm hands. But if there were any such in Israel they ought to have been found in the Sanhedrim, for the pick of the nation was there.

It is strange to seek the enemies of our Lord among the elders of Juda, the wisest of the race, the "men of good report"; and certainly

the Sanhedrim for the most part did stand well with the people. The Scribes were learned, and learning has a wonderful charm for the ignorant. The Pharisees were scrupulous in the observance of the law of God. They poured large alms into the Temple coffers; they said long prayers and kept strict fasts. They were careful, too, in the observance of Jewish customs. They often washed their hands; they kept the Sabbath holy; they avoided the company of sinners. Men who did this must be holy, the people thought, and worthy of reverence. The Sadducees were of high birth, courtly in manners, and lavish with their money. All this made them objects of admiration to the people.

But let us look a little closer into this *venerable* assembly and see what history and the gospel tell us. We shall find things are not what they seem.

The president's chair is occupied by Annas, whose very name makes us shudder. He is sometimes called the High Priest, because he held that office for nine years and was then deposed by one who had no legal right to depose him. He was a bad man, hated by the people, and feared with a slavish fear. To him and his impious family belonged the bazaars held in the Temple at the time of the Passover, stalls for the sale of unleavened bread, lambs, pigeons, etc., which

brought in an enormous income to their owners. Little reason then would he have to feel friendly towards One Whose sacred hands had turned out his cattle and his merchandise.

High Priest by right of election was Caiaphas, son-in-law to Annas, a mean-spirited, unprincipled man, who held office for eighteen years. Though guardian of the religious rights of the people, he moved no finger to oppose the Roman claims. He saw the Roman eagles borne into God's Temple and said not a word to prevent the desecration.

Looking round from one to another of that grave assembly, we notice some of the members wear broad leathern bands round their foreheads and wide fringes to their cloaks. These are Pharisees. The leathern cases, or phylacteries, containing texts of Scripture, are emblems of piety, and therefore worn large by these devout men. The sky-blue fringe on their cloaks, an emblem of purity, were widened to show their superior cleanness of heart. For the Pharisees were hypocrites, that is, they set up for being what they were not. They set up for keeping the written law of God and the unwritten law of tradition with absolute faithfulness. Yet they did nothing of the kind. God's law in the Ten Commandments they broke without shame; the ridiculous traditions which their elders had added in explanation of the Law

they scrupulously kept, because they were rules of conduct which easily distinguished them from their neighbours and the observance of which gave a stamp of sanctity to their persons.

"Thou shalt keep holy the Sabbath-day," was the law of God, but the Pharisees added that for a blind man to use his staff, or for a scribe to write two letters of the alphabet one after the other, or for a sick person to rub his rheumatic limb was to break this commandment of God.

"Honour thy father and thy mother" was God's command, binding children to take care of their parents and help them if they were poor. But the Pharisees said: "Consecrate your money to God by saying over it the word 'corban' (gift), then you need give it neither to God nor your parents."

Such were the Pharisees who sat in the Great Council in the time of our Lord. What was the matter with them? When we are ill we have to tell the doctor our symptoms. Here we have plenty of symptoms, what was the disease? Was it pride? Not exactly—or rather, not only. Pride there was, but there was something worse. Pride often blinds people so much that they do not know their faults. But this was not the case with the Pharisees. They did not believe in their own goodness, but wanted to make others believe in

it. They did not care to be virtuous, but craved to be thought so. This is hypocrisy, and of all sins the most displeasing to God. It seems as if He could not bear the sight of the hypocrite: "No hypocrite shall come before His presence," Holy Scripture says. Yet we shall meet these hypocrites often enough in the Divine Presence.

Those princely looking men in rich robes, foreign in manner, worldly in talk, are the Sadducees. They are the very opposite to the Pharisees and dislike them heartily. No long prayers *for them*, no taking up of bewildering little laws made by men—why, they do not even believe the whole law of God! There is no after life, and so, of course, no resurrection, they say; there are no angels nor spirits. Annas, once High Priest of God, is an unbelieving Sadducee.

Notice the Scribes, men learned in the Law, who interpret it to the people and transcribe it with great care. They are puffed up with their own knowledge and feel so capable of teaching, as to consider learning from anyone a mere waste of time—"they are proud knowing nothing." What dispositions had these to learn from Christ Who came to teach the lowly of heart?

Pharisees, Sadducees, Scribes, these were the devil's allies in his war with the King. And

they were the perfection of allies. The poor demoniacs sounded our Lord's praises, "Thou art the Holy One of Israel," but the Pharisees and Scribes blasphemed Him. "Thou art a Samaritan and hast a devil," they said. (John viii.) "We know that Thou hast a devil." When He worked miracles, they told the people His power was from the prince of devils, Beelzebub. When He spoke as no other man ever spoke, they "were filled with madness, and they talked with one another what they might do to" Him. When He called God His Father, they "took up stones to stone Him . . . for blasphemy." And when the people were in admiration at His doctrine, they turned upon them, sometimes with ridicule. "He is mad, why hear you Him?" sometimes with threats if "any man shall confess Him to be Christ, he shall be put out of the synagogue."

In the time of our Lord this Council of the seventy was greatly feared by the Jews. Herod was dangerous, Pilate was cruel, but the Sanhedrim were more terrible than either. They were everywhere, knew everything, judged, condemned without appeal. To be "cast out of the synagogue," to be excommunicated, was a sentence dreaded like death. It was this fear that made the influence of the Sanhedrim such a power with the people."

What exceedingly foolish things the pride of these Scribes and Pharisees made them do! They sat in judgment upon our Lord's actions *and condemned them*. They dogged His footsteps to find out something to blame in His conduct. One Sabbath-day they met a man carrying his bed, the same whom we saw our Lord cure in the porticoes of the Probatica Pond. They were horrified—how dared he carry his bed. According to their tradition not even a false tooth might be carried that day. Calling the man to account, they found out that it was by the express command of Jesus of Nazareth that he had done so. Nothing could have suited their purpose better, here was what they wanted—something *to blame*, and from that day they followed our Lord wherever He went, accusing Him to the people, and trying to turn them against Him.

A short time after this event, one bright Sabbath-day, Jesus passed through the corn-fields with His disciples. Some Pharisees, sent to spy, had joined the happy little party. The wheat, white and waving, stood elbow high on either side of the pathway. The Apostles went forward and plucking the ears, rubbed them in their hands and ate, for they were hungry.

What a crime! Down came the Pharisees with a sharp rebuke. To rub ears of corn was

a kind of threshing, and threshing was forbidden on God's day of rest. Who were they to break the Sabbath? Very meekly the Apostles turn to our Lord for defence. He stood still and looking upon their accusers said : " Have you not read so much as this, what David, when himself was hungry and they that were with him ; how he went into the house of God, and took and ate the bread of proposition, and gave them to them that were with him, which is not lawful to eat, but only for priests . . . Or have you not read in the Law, that on the Sabbath-day the priests in the Temple break the Sabbath, and are without blame ? . . . If you knew what this meaneth : I will have mercy and not sacrifice, you would never have condemned the innocent. For the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath."

A gentle rebuke, but it did not soften the cruel hearts of His enemies. Had they possessed one spark of mercy they would have felt compassion for that young Rabbi and his faithful followers, who even on the Sabbath, when all the Jews had extra food, were driven to pluck the corn by the wayside to keep off their hunger.

Not content with finding fault in our Lord's actions, His enemies tried to catch Him in His speech. They were too blind to understand that He was infinitely wise and that they were

almost infinitely ignorant. So they undertook to get the better of Him in argument, and they asked Him questions that they thought He could not answer, "tempting Him," St. Luke calls it. Once, it was the last week of our Lord's life, the Pharisees, with the Herodians, a sect of courtiers whom they hated, came to our Lord with a question so cleverly worded that in answering it, they thought, our Lord could not fail to endanger His life. It was one of the many disputed points of the time : *Could the Jewish nation lawfully pay the tribute Cæsar demanded of them?* If Jesus said : "No, you are the people of God, and owe tribute only to Him," He would put Himself into the power of Rome. If He said : "Cæsar is your King, you must, of course, pay him his tribute," the people would have turned in anger upon Him.

With a show of reverence then these clever men came to our Lord and said, blandly :

"Master, we know that Thou art a true speaker, and carest not for any man ; for Thou regardest not the person of men, but teachest the way of God in truth. Is it lawful to give tribute to Cæsar ; or shall we not give it?"

Jesus looked full into their sleek faces and answered : "Why do you tempt me, ye hypocrites? Bring me a penny that I may see it? Whose is this image and inscription?"

"Cæsar's," they say. The little coin was stamped with the laurel-crowned head of the Roman Emperor.

"Render therefore to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's and to God the things that are God's."

They " marvelled " and " held their peace." In one short sentence Jesus had given an answer of infinite wisdom and frustrated their malice. What use was there in devising clever questions? " They wondered," said St. Matthew, who was standing by, and wondering, slunk away.

We saw in the last chapter how tender and compassionate our Lord was to a sinner, and how all who came to Him were received with pardon and pity. But to the Pharisees He showed no pity; His words to them were hard and terrifying: *You are not of My sheep; You shall die in your sins.* Upon them He pronounced woe upon woe. Why, why did He appear so stern? Why did he show up their faults and tell the people to have nothing to do with them?

The Pharisees were bad men, of " a hard forehead and an obstinate heart." Their minds were thoroughly made up to do what was wrong. " You are of your father, the devil, and the desires of your father you will do," were our Lord's own words to them. Worse still—

they were not only blind, but leaders of the blind. They were not only wicked themselves, but they taught others to be wicked. The simple folk followed them, the ignorant believed in them, and to believe in them where our Lord was concerned, was to turn from God and from all that was good.

Of them and of them only, our Lord said :
" Let them alone. It is an awful thing to be left alone by God, to have no share in His love, in His grace, in His rewards. But it is the punishment of the proud, for the proud He sends empty away. And where are they to go to get filled with *the good things*? Where are there any good things out of God?"

Let us learn this lesson from the Scribes and Pharisees—a horror even of the beginnings of pride: for pride leads to that hardness of heart which not even the love and compassion of our Lord can conquer.

XXIII.

THE MINISTERS OF THE KING.

"Blessed are they that saw Thee and were honoured with Thy friendship."—ECCLES. xlviii.

A KINGDOM is a place where a King reigns supreme in his own right. The Kingdom of God is Heaven, where God as King reigns supreme in his own right. This Kingdom lasts from eternity to eternity.

When God the Son became Man and dwelt amongst us, He came as a King. For God can never abdicate. He can never cease to be the Supreme Ruler. He came into this world which is part of His Kingdom. "His footstool," and He came with all the powers of a King. But He came to reign, not as a temporal, but as a spiritual Sovereign, and His Kingdom was to be a spiritual Kingdom. When Jesus was born, Augustus Cæsar was the ruler of the greatest part of the known world; and Jesus, the King of eternal glory, was enrolled at Bethlehem as his subject. Herod, when he heard that there was a new-born King of the Jews, was beside himself with fear. But the little King slumbered in his

Mother's arms with never a thought of usurpation. So all through His life, King though He was, He did not interfere with the rulers of the earth. Why? Because He came to establish a spiritual Kingdom, His Church, He called it, one worthy of His greatness and majesty. And to found this Kingdom He spent thirty-three years of toil and suffering.

Think what the Church must be which cost its founder, God, such labour and such pain. St. Paul says: "Christ loved the Church, and delivered Himself up for it, that He might sanctify it . . . that He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle on any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Ephesians v.) During His whole life and throughout His Passion, our Lord was gathering together riches for His children. And when He died He gave over to the safe-keeping of His Church all this treasure to be dispensed in the form of grace.

The Church then is the Kingdom of God upon earth. It is a real Kingdom, with subjects and ministers and a King. We know Who the King is. Now we are going to see who were the ministers.

Every King has ministers. He must have them, for He cannot be everywhere, nor can He know everything. To choose good

ministers is one of the most important duties of a sovereign, for upon a good choice depends, in a great measure, the prosperity of a Kingdom.

Our King knows everything and, as God, is everywhere. Yet He had ministers, and ministers chosen with the wisdom of God. He knew all men and read their hearts as we read a smile on a face we love. Every thought was open to Him, every intention. He knew their past, their future, and that quick moment we call the present. Whom will He choose? Do you not feel curious to know who His ministers were, and what were the qualifications that made Him choose them out of the thousands that followed Him?

For more than a year Jesus had been with the multitude and had gathered round Him a band of devoted friends who had followed Him on His journeys, watched with Him at night, walked with Him in the heat of the day, eaten with Him, and, from want of food, fasted with Him. They had listened to His preaching and "wondered" and "admired," and had been "astonished." When He was absent they sought Him; when He attempted to leave them, they clung to Him. They "pressed upon Him to hear the Word of God," "they glorified Him." Out of these devoted loyal hearts He was going to choose His twelve ministers. Twelve He would have to be always

with Him, to labour with Him whilst He was on earth, and to carry on His work when He was gone. They were to be with Him in a very intimate way, close friends of His, friends to whom He could teach sublime truths, of whom He could expect strong virtue, and to whom He might turn for sympathy. To these He would entrust the power of working miracles. Like Him they should lay their hands on the sick and heal them, and they should command the devils and they would depart.

Before the grand day of election, our Lord spent the whole night in prayer to His Heavenly Father. In the morning He gathered together His disciples and gave out the names of the chosen.

“And it came to pass in those days that He went out into a mountain to pray, and He passed the whole night in the prayer of God. And when day was come He called unto Him His disciples whom He would Himself, and they came unto Him. And He made that twelve should be with Him, and that He might send them to preach : Simon, whom He surnamed Peter ; and Andrew, his brother ; and James, the son of Zebedee ; and John, the brother of James ; and He called them Boanerges, which is, the sons of thunder ; Philip and Bartholomew ; Matthew and Thomas ; James, the son of Alphaeus ; and Simon, the Cananean,

who is called Zelotes ; and Jude, the brother of James and Judas Iscariot, who was the traitor. And he gave them power to heal sicknesses and to cast out devils."

These are the names of the chosen Twelve. Of some among them we know little more than the name.

Andrew, who brought his brother Peter to our Lord, was a lover of the Cross, and died like his Master, crucified.

James, son of Zebedee, shared with his brother John that impetuous zeal which gained for him the title of Boanerges. He was one of the favoured three who saw our Lord raise the little daughter of Jairus to life ; saw Him transfigured on the mount ; and was present during His agony in the Garden of Olives. James fled then, but the day came when, like the rest of the Apostles, he gave up his life for his Lord.

Philip, right through the gospel story, shows himself the Apostle. No sooner had he entered our Lord's service than he went in search of his friend Nathaniel, and brought him to Jesus. And in the last days of Holy Week, he was the means of bringing to Him strangers of Greece, who, without his gentle kindness, might never have known their Saviour.

Bartholomew, or Nathaniel, was distinguished by our Lord Himself as "an Israelite indeed in whom there is no guile."

Matthew, or *Levi*, was a tax-gatherer. We can almost hear the murmur of wonder which greeted that name when our Lord called him out from amongst the hundreds standing there. A tax-gatherer, a publican! The people marvelled that the Messiah should choose one of a hated class to be His constant companion. The Pharisees never spoke to, nor touched, a publican—surely it was strange that Jesus should make a friend of one!

But Jesus did not think so. He chose for His friends “whom He would Himself.” And sinners even, if they turned to Him, were chosen for the highest dignities.

One day, as Matthew sat at the receipt of customs in Capharnaum, our Lord passed by his booth and, looking at him, said: “Follow Me!” Long had Matthew hoped and prayed that such a call might come to him. And now he heard it. With eager hands he pushed aside the money heaps and followed our Lord. John, and James and Andrew went back to their fishing nets, but never do we hear that Matthew went back to his toll-booth. He gathered his friends the publicans about him indeed, and made a farewell feast, but it was to honour Him who sat at table with him. Matthew seems to have been a silent man, for no speech of his is recorded. But he has left

a wonderful written work, the first and longest of the four Gospels.

Thomas has a touch of Peter's character. He was straightforward, naturally brave, and had an intense love for our Lord. When Jesus had to go to Jerusalem at the peril of His life, Thomas urged his companions to accompany Him. "Let us go and die with Him," he said, and he meant it. But like all the Apostles, he was dull of understanding. At the Last Supper he told our Lord he did not know where He was going, nor did he know the way. After the Resurrection all the Apostles failed in their faith, refusing to believe the holy women's story of the Risen Christ. But Thomas went further. He would not believe the Apostles themselves. His own eyes, his own touch only would he credit. We shall see how our Lord takes him at his word and forces from him the cry, "My Lord and my God!"

James, called "the Great," was our Lord's cousin, the first Bishop of Jerusalem, and the most venerated man of his time, a meek man and humble of heart. "Let the brother of *low condition*," he writes, "glory in his exaltation."

Jude was the brother of James the Less and cousin of our Lord. At the Last Supper he asked Him why it was that He showed Himself to the Apostles and not to the rest of men. He seemed to long for all to know his Master as he

knew Him. In his Epistle, St. Jude shows that, like Jesus, he loved nature. He speaks of the light clouds skimming across the sky; of "the trees in autumn"; of "the wandering stars"; "the raging waves of the sea."

Of *Simon*, the Zealot, we only know what his surname tells us; perhaps he was taken by our Lord from the fierce sect of Zealots, which slew the enemies of Israel without law or mercy.

Of *Peter* and *John* we know most. They stand out in the gospel-story more life-like even than Philip and Thomas. We see them speak, we almost seem to see them think.

How Peter's heart must have leapt when he heard the voice he loved so well call his name. Chosen out of thousands, chosen to be always with Him, *he* with his fisherman's habits, his Galilean roughness, his uncultivated mind, his ignorance, *he* chosen! He might well be astonished, for naturally speaking he was quite unfitted for the spiritual work he was called to do. Yet Peter, notwithstanding his faults, had many virtues and many qualifications. We shall see him forward, rash, presumptuous, obstinate, but also honest, generous, devoted, without a spark of vanity or selfishness. He was head-strong, but submissive, waiting for a look or a word before acting. *Bid me come to Thee*, he said, standing on the edge of the boat. "*If Thou wilt*, we will make three tabernacles."

"*At Thy word* I will let down the net." Under our Lord's training his whole nature became, not changed, but elevated, that is, brought to a higher level. From being a true Jew, he became a true Christian, a follower of Christ. He who was so bold and headstrong came to see that "a quiet and meek spirit" is true greatness, and that to be "merciful, modest, and humble" are lovelier qualities than forwardness and pride.

Like all Jews Peter hated suffering. Once when our Lord spoke to him of His passion and death, Peter was horrified, and drawing Him apart, said in a tone of rebuke: "Far be it from Thee, Lord," as if he could not think of anything so dreadful. Yet this same Peter learned to love suffering, to rejoice when the cruel lash tore his flesh and made his blood flow. And later he writes to his converts, telling them to *rejoice* if they are allowed to share in the sufferings of Christ, and that they are *blessed* indeed if they are reproached for His sake.

Perhaps we love Peter best as a penitent. He sinned grievously, he fell low, he denied his Master with oaths and curses; but how he wept—till his cheeks were furrowed with the running of his tears. And in his sorrow he trusted our Lord, whom he knew so well. "The Lord is sweet" he tells us. Peter indeed found Him sweet when, after the Resurrection, the

Master whom he had denied came to seek him and tell him that he was forgiven. And Peter trusted our Lord's word, and turned to Him with the confiding love of a child, with the old love, strengthened and purified by sorrow.

John was the "disciple whom Jesus loved." We are told that our Lord loved Martha and Mary and Lazarus, that He looked on the young Ruler and loved him. But the love He had for John seems different from this. These were singled out of the multitude, but John out of the Twelve. His name of "Thunderer" shows him to us as passionate and quick to revenge. He was ambitious, too, and self-seeking. Might he have the best place in our Lord's Kingdom, he asked—he the youngest! But he lived with our Lord, and he watched Him until the humility of the Divine heart sank into his heart, and he became meek and humble, and came to love our Lord with a love so strong that not suffering, nor shame, nor even that strongest of passions, fear, could keep him away from Pilate's Palace and the Cross on Calvary.

There was another Apostle—Judas Iscariot. How we shudder when we hear that name. Yet he was once innocent and good; his face was open, his eyes were clear and truthful. He had his faults, but they were not bigger than Peter's, not more dangerous than John's. He

had the grace of vocation and the grace to follow it out. He had the example of our Lord and His love and friendship.

These were the chosen ministers of the new Kingdom—but wait. There is standing somewhere in the crowd, one who will sit in judgment with the Twelve, one who will take a vacant bishopric. We know little of him, but Peter tells us later that he was one of those who were with them when our Lord lived upon earth, and “compained with Him from the baptism of John until the day when He was taken up.” (Acts i.) The name Matthias was not called then, but in about two years' time he will take the place of the fallen one amongst the Twelve.

Let us examine these ministers of the King and see if they answer to our idea of what the ministers of a great Kingdom ought to be. Five were fishermen; five more poor mechanics; one was a publican; one only perhaps of better standing. Their minds were gross, that is, unspiritual—they were *slow of heart*, as our Lord called the two disciples going to Emmaus. Slow of heart, not slow of head, for this means stupid, and mere stupidity our Lord would not have minded. Slow of heart means being so taken up with the things of this world as to

find it difficult to raise the mind to the things of the world to come.

Yet these were the men *most fitted* for the King's work; and for one reason only. They had nothing of their own—no learning, no influence, no appearance, no refinement, no power of speech. All the gifts of eloquence, knowledge, influence, that they received later they received straight from God, straight from the Holy Ghost. "Every best gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights," one of them said. (St. James i.) They were to be the "glory of Christ," His shining lights in the world, but not one ray was to be their own, each brightening beam was to come from the Sun of Justice, Christ our Lord.

So our Lord bore with their faults and tempers, and their roughness, for three years. He suffered their cowardly flight, their faint-heartedness, their slowness to believe in His Resurrection that they might learn to know themselves and think little of themselves. Then when they were thoroughly humbled He sent the Holy Ghost to teach them all truth, to strengthen what was weak in them, to enlighten what was dull, and warm what was cold.

Then we see Peter full of the Holy Spirit speak before thousands of strangers. We see the fisherman catching men and landing 3,000

souls in his Master's net. We see him and John stand before the awful array of the seventy-one ancients, and with a holy boldness speak words that *cut to the heart* those rejected priests of God. We see God's authority pass from the great national councillors, the Sanhedrim, to the poor Galilean fishermen who, assembled in Jerusalem, laid down laws for the new Kingdom of God.

This is what the ministers of the King become. But at present they are only wayward, rough, uncultivated men. And even as such our Lord loved them.

XXIV.

THE KING'S CODE.

“Thou hast taught Thy people.”—WIS. xii.

OUR Lord has met the multitude on the mountain-top. They have come from all parts of Palestine, from Jerusalem, and Judea, and beyond the Jordan. No proclamation brought them together, no signal was given and answered. They had come, drawn by love and admiration. Some amongst them were noble, some learned, but the greater part were poor and ignorant. The Holy Women who ministered to Him were there, the disciples whom He had been training, and the Apostles whom He had just chosen. The crutches lying strewn about unheeded on the ground, the bandages folded and put on one side, the beds rolled up, showed that Jesus had been working miracles. But now He was sitting at rest on a grassy hillock, and hushed and still, the multitude stood about Him. They were awed by His quiet majesty, and felt that a solemn moment in their lives had come.

They were right. Our Lord had sublime truths to teach them. He was going to open

their eyes and show them the Kingdom of the Messiah, such as God had planned it from all eternity. The Pharisees had taught them to look for a Messiah who would triumph in a miraculous way over the *children of outer darkness*, as they were taught to call the Gentiles, and who would invite the Jews, the *children of God*, to a wonderful unending banquet. No other nation might attend that feast, it was all for Israel, for the "Sons of Heaven." Then the Messiah would reign as King in a world of temporal prosperity and riches. The vine and olive and fig would yield their fruits daily, and the corn, growing to the height of palm-trees, would be reaped and harvested without labour.

What poor work for the Messiah to do. To give His followers plenty to eat and drink, security at home, and peace abroad! And this would satisfy their ambitions! Low, indeed, had the chosen nation fallen! Children sometimes hope for good things to eat in the next world. A little boy trudging along a dusty road one hot summer day, looked up at his sister and said: 'Are there drinks in heaven?' He was only a little boy, not much more than a baby. But when God's own people hoped for nothing better from their long-promised Messiah than a foe defeated and an endless feast, we feel pity indeed.

The sun was half-way up the heavens, the dew-drops on the grass were disappearing fast. Down below at the foot of the mountain, white-sailed ships flitted noiselessly across the glittering lake. In the meadows the "lilies" red, gold, and purple spread themselves out in the sun. Not a sound was to be heard.

"And opening His mouth He taught them, saying: 'Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

" 'Blessed are the meek: for they shall possess the land.

" 'Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.

" 'Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice: for they shall have their fill.

" 'Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.

" 'Blessed are the clean of heart: for they shall see God.

" 'Blessed are the peace-makers; for they shall be called the children of God.

" 'Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice' sake; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.'" (St. Matt. v.)

Blessed, that beautiful word! It means sure of salvation, safely happy. Who are these happy ones? Our Lord has told us. The *poor in spirit*, who hold so loosely the goods of this world, that they readily give them up

when God or their neighbour asks. The *meek*, the King's own heroes, who bear insult and blows rather than offend by an angry glance or word. The *mourners*, whose hearts are sad with sorrow for sin, and who, turning away from earth, look to heaven for comfort. The *hungry and thirsty*, who long for heavenly things as famished children long for food. The *merciful*, who, like their King, "go about doing good." The *clean of heart*, on whom sin cannot settle, whose contrition wipes it away fast, keeping clear the image of God within them. The *peace-makers*, who bring Heaven's message to men. The *persecuted*, so like their crucified Lord, that they receive the blows intended for Him.

These are the blessed of the new Kingdom. What a revelation to the Jews! Their idea of blessedness we have seen—a place at a banquet. What our Lord called blessedness they would have called misery. To them *poverty* was misery. Their Patriarchs, when dying, blessed their children with "the fatness of the land, abundance of corn and wine." (Gen xxvi.) *Meekness* was despicable: "An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth," was their law. Their *hunger and thirst* was not after justice, but after renown, and spoil, and glory. *Mercy* was a virtue almost unknown. The cry of the Jew was for vengeance. "O Lord of hosts . .

let me see, I beseech Thee, Thy vengeance on them." A *peace-maker* was to them not nearly so worthy of honour as a man of war. "Blessed be the Lord, my God, Who teacheth my hands to fight, and my fingers to war," said David. As for *persecution*, that could only be the lot of the wicked: "Remove from me reproach and contempt: because I have sought Thy testimonies." (Ps. cxviii.) Well might the Jews call our Lord's doctrine *new*. Well might He Himself say: "Behold, I make all things new."

Did that happy multitude, as they sat before Him, listening to His words, think what a model for the Blessed was Christ their King. He was *poor*—a carpenter's Son, born in a stable; His food was an alms, and He had not whereon to lay His head. He was *meek*, the prophets spoke of Him as of a sheep; and His ambassador pointed Him out as a Lamb; so meek that puny men dared to insult and mock Him, and "He did not open His mouth." He *mourned* His whole life through over the sins of His people, and once His tears were blood. He so *thirsted after justice* that as a boy of twelve He broke the silence of childhood and spoke words full of zeal. "I must be about My Father's business," were His first recorded words. And the second had a like meaning. To John He said: "Suffer it to be

so now, for so it becometh us to fulfil all justice." His heart was full of *mercy*, and His lips spoke words of mercy. To a poor sinful woman crouching at His feet, He said: "I will not condemn thee." And his greatest joy on earth was to say: "Thy sins are forgiven thee." *Peace-maker!* No need to show how Jesus was the great Peace-maker, how He brought peace into the world. He blotted out men's sins and brought down a full pardon from God. His salutation was, "Peace be with you;" "My peace I leave you." And He was *persecuted*. Was there ever a one so persecuted as our Blessed Lord? The people of Nazareth rejected Him with scorn; the ancients of the Jewish people laid snares to trap Him in His speech, His own Apostle betrayed Him, His own nation fastened His hands to the Cross.

This is the pattern on the Mount.

To us our Lord's teaching is not new. We were made Christians at Baptism, we are drilled followers of Christ, and we thank God we are. But are we quite comfortable about ranging ourselves on His side? Shall we feel exactly in our right place amongst these Blessed? Some of us, at least, may have a sort of feeling deep down in our hearts, that perhaps there is more of the Jew about us than we should like to own.

One way of settling this inconvenient thought

would be to dismiss it altogether from our minds. But we will not do that. For that would be an act of cowardice. The Sermon on the Mount is of immense importance to us. It shows us clearly our duties. We must not lay it down and say: "Oh, yes; it is very beautiful and most fitting for Apostles and Saints and all those sort of people, but it is far above me." It must not be far above me. I must square my thoughts with those of my Leader, or I cannot follow Him in truth. This is no place for an examination of conscience; but we might run our eye down the list of the Beatitudes to see if they in any way describe us.

Poor in spirit—what does it mean? There lived in Idumea about a thousand years before our Lord, a Gentile, who said in his trouble of body, and heart, and mind: "The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away; as it has pleased the Lord, so is it done. Blessed be the name of the Lord." That man was poor in spirit. And such a spirit is required of us—to hold our good things in trust, and to be ready to give them back when God requires them again. Surely this is not much to ask. You say to a boy, "Hold my hat, please." And he holds it. When you say, "Give it me now," you expect him to give it. If he marches off with it and refuses to part with it, we know what happens.

All we have we hold in trust. We have nothing that we have not received. God is the Giver with the right to recall His gifts. Is this quite clear to me? Is it as clear that all I have belongs to God, as that my hat is mine and not that boy's?

Holding in trust should make us humble. Does the being called "well off" puff me up and make me look down on those who have less of this world's goods? Or if I am poor does it make my ears tingle to be called so?

Meekness. True meekness we all admire. There is a counterfeit kind which we sometimes call by that name, but which is no virtue at all. Cowardice, timidity, sloth, or a thick skin, sometimes enables people to put up with a great deal. These people need not be meek. The truly meek bear injury patiently, from a supernatural motive. Can we safely say: "That is what I do," or do we plume ourselves upon knowing how to hold our own, letting others see they are not the masters, and so on? If so, let these words of our Lord ring in our ears: "Blessed are the meek!"

Mourn! How do we like the sound of that word! But before answering that question let us see what our Lord means by mourning. Does He love long faces? No. Once for all, no.

He loves us to rejoice. It would astonish you to find in how many places in the Holy Scriptures there come these words: *Rejoice and be glad*. What then does the Beatitude of the mourners mean? It means that since we are sinners we ought to be sorry for our sins and that in this sorrow there is so much joy that those who have it may rightly be called blessed even in this world.

True penitents tell us that tears of contrition are sweet. What makes *our* tears come? For what are *we* sorry? Because we have offended God, or because somebody has offended us; because we are vexed, out of temper, snubbed; because our pride has been wounded, or we have been disappointed? These reasons are not worth a tear. There is no blessedness in mourning like this.

Hunger and thirst. How these words of our Lord come home to us! We know well what hunger and thirst are, and can understand so easily how strong desires may be called hunger and thirst. What are *our* desires? Are they for comfort, an easy time, a splendid career; to cut a figure in the world; to get a great deal of praise? Or are they for justice? Justice has a rigid sound, and perhaps we do not understand what it means. It means all goodness, all holiness. It means doing good and doing it in God's way. So our Lord says we are blessed

if our striving is for goodness, for holiness. Suppose all the gifts we had ever set our hearts upon were written out, would the greater number be spiritual, or would they be temporal? Would the catalogue sound something like this: a fine day; to get well; success; a letter; a gun; pocket money; a bicycle? Are all our strong desires confined to such things—very good in their way, but not to be compared with the overcoming of one fault, or the grace to keep back an angry word, or to bear a disappointment well. Yet do we ask for these and strive to get them?

The Merciful. Here we feel quite comfortable. At any rate we are not cruel or vicious; we are not like the Jews wanting an eye or a tooth from those who have offended us. Perhaps not, but how do we forgive our companions? How long do we keep up in our hearts an "I'll-pay-you-back" disposition? Do we ever bring ourselves to do a kind action for those who have vexed us? Do we make excuses for their faults, or do we love to point them out?

Clean of heart. The habit of making acts of contrition is the most blessed of habits. It is our best safeguard upon earth. It keeps our souls pure and clean as nothing else can. Sin cannot live where there is much contrition;

it flies before it like the dark night before dawn. Does contrition come easily to us? Do we "take time and care" over the acts night and morning? As we value the purity of our souls let us begin to form the habit now if we have not got it. It will bring us to that purity of heart to which our Lord has promised the sight of God.

Perhaps none have so many opportunities of being *peace-makers* in a small way as children. For experience shows that there is a good amount of falling out and quarrelling, and occasional royal fights even, wherever children are to be found. What sort of peace-makers do we make? Do we take delight in the atmosphere of a combat, and like to have a word in every dispute? Some children have a wonderful tact in turning aside the anger of others. They draw off one combatant and dispose of the other in an astonishing way. They say a kind word, or make a well-timed excuse, or stand up for the absent, and have something good to say of everyone. These are blessed little peace-makers, and deserve a near place to the meek King on the Mount.

Persecuted. Here, at least, we come to something which does not concern us. We are not persecuted, and not likely to be. Are you quite sure? You will find that some time, perhaps often in your lives, you will have to

take our Lord's side at the cost of real persecution. It may come in the shape of a sneer, a joke, a laugh ; possibly in the shape of a boot or a wet sponge, as it came to the young sailor who would say his morning and evening prayers when it was not the custom to say them on board his ship. On such an occasion what would you do ? Would you say : " I don't like to be laughed at ; it is most unpleasant. If people make fun of me I must give in " ? Or would you be like the brave sailor boy and stand staunchly by the right ?

Our Lord's doctrine was new to the Jews, and it was attractive. It drew them to aim high, to lift themselves above their natural inclinations, to long for the " better gifts " . . . We, too, like to feel that great things are expected of us. We like the mark at which we aim to be set high. We do better when better things are asked of us.

See how high our mark is set ! Above the natural law, above the Mosaic law, reaching up to the Law of Christ : " Be ye therefore perfect, as also your Heavenly Father is perfect." We know how to be perfect now. We cannot, dare not say with St. Thomas : " We do not know the way." We have heard the Beatitudes preached, and learnt from our Lord's Life how to carry them out. The carrying out will cost, self-denial will be hard ; struggles with self

perpetual. But with God's help we shall conquer and be in this world even, *His Blessed*.

How confidently our Lord spoke to the Apostles and disciples who were standing nearest to Him. "You are the light of the world," He said; not "you will be," or "I hope you may be," but *you are*. Let us think He says those words to us: "You are the light of the world," and let us live up to His expectations. Light gives light and beauty and warmth. So must our lives. People must look up to us Catholics and see in us the virtues they are to practise. Our lives must be beautiful that others may be won to love virtue. Our lives must be full of loving deeds that others may be cheered and warmed and softened. Can we disappoint our Lord and King? Can we have the face to tell Him that He expects too much from us, that we are only weak mortals after all and cannot be expected to be perfect, that His conditions are hard? They are not hard. Look at their contraries. There is no happiness for the discontented—rich or poor, for the quarrelsome, for the fretful. None for those who pass their life sleepily without a struggle for good. Nor for the hard of heart who turn away unmoved by human pain. Nor for those whose sins are living within them. What He asks of us is only for our own good. His conditions are not hard.

Then look at the rewards! How infinitely generous are the promises made by the King on the Mount. Herod Antipas promised half his kingdom to one who pleased him. Our Lord promised His whole Heavenly Kingdom, and the sight of God, which is eternal happiness, to those who make themselves pleasing in His eyes.

We are *to possess the land*, He says, "the land of the living." We are *to be comforted*—"God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." We are *to be filled*. "They shall no more hunger nor thirst." To "*obtain mercy* from God, Who is rich in mercy." And *the Kingdom of Heaven* is to be ours. The Kingdom of Heaven! If we could only see the splendour that awaits the Blessed *there*! St. John in his old age, when his eyes were dim, almost closed to the things of this world, saw Heaven opened and tried to write down in human language the beauty of that wonderful vision. All that earth has that is sparkling and bright to the eye, John tells us he saw in Heaven: "a sea of glass like crystal," a "great white Throne" arched round with a rainbow of many colours, "candlesticks of gold," and a "golden altar;" the saints "that serve Him day and night" in their robes of "fine linen glittering and white," with "golden girdles" and "crowns of gold." All that the ear delights to hear, he heard in

Heaven. "The voice which I heard was as" the "voice of harpers harping on their harps. And they sang, as it were, a new canticle before the Throne": "Alleluia! For the Lord our God, the Almighty hath reigned. Let us be glad and rejoice, and give glory to Him." Heavenly perfumes were there: golden vials full of odours, which are the prayers of the saints," "golden censers," "with much incense" wafting on high their fragrance.

In another place John tries again to tell us how beautiful was the Heaven he saw:

"Behold, a door was opened in Heaven . . . and I, John, saw the living City, the new Jerusalem . . . and the light thereof was like to a precious stone, as to the jasper-stone, even as crystal . . . And the building of the wall thereof was of jasper-stone, but the City itself pure gold, like to clear glass. And the foundations of the wall of the City were adorned with all manner of precious stones,"—sapphire, blue as the sky, milky white chalcidony, bright green emerald, yellow topaz, and pale purple amethyst. "And the twelve gates are twelve pearls, one to each; and every several gate was of one several pearl. And the street of the City was pure gold, as it were transparent glass.

"And I saw no Temple therein. For the Lord God Almighty is the Temple thereof and

the Lamb. And the City hath no need of the sun, nor of the moon to shine in it. For the glory of God hath enlightened it, and the Lamb is the lamp thereof. And the nations shall walk in the light of it . . . And they shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads. And night shall be no more; and they shall not need the light of the lamp, nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God shall enlighten them, and they shall reign for ever and ever."

To reign for ever! Let us ask our Blessed Lord so to help us with His grace that when He calls us before the great "white Throne," we may be worthy to wear robes "glittering and white," worthy to sing the eternal "Alleluia," worthy to reign with Him for ever.

XXV.

THE ROYAL PHYSICIAN

“Thou art a good and merciful God.”—JONAS iv.

A CHILD about three years old stood by his mother's side, asking her a question. She was trying to write a letter and replied hurriedly : “I don't know, my boy.” “Then think,” was the answer. Let us take the advice to ourselves and *think* for a few moments.

We have followed our Lord about and have listened to Him speaking, watched Him heal the sick, and cast out devils. We have heard the blasphemies uttered against Him, seen Him hunted by His enemies, and seen His life endangered. Have we forgotten, in looking so long on the *Son of man*, as He loved to call Himself, that He is the only-begotten Son of God? He was so human, that He seemed to be only man. When tired, He slept ; when grieved, He sighed ; when sad, He wept. He was “astonished,” “in admiration,” “He marvelled,” as man does—yet, He was the unchangeable, the all knowing God. *Wast Thou not from the beginning, O Lord, my God, my*

Holy One? "He hath measured the waters in the hollow of His hand, and weighed the heavens with His palm; He hath poised with three fingers the bulk of the earth, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance" (Is. xl.)

Jesus is God ! the solid earth,
The ocean broad and bright,
The countless stars, like golden dust
That strew the skies at night ;
The wheeling storm, the dreadful fire,
The pleasant wholesome air,
The summer's sun, the winter's frost,
His own creations were.*

What we have to think about is that He, of Whom we are reading, was *true man*, which is not difficult, and *true God*, which is difficult. If we lose sight of this last truth, the beautiful lessons He teaches us will be in great part lost, and we shall miss one of the ends for which He became man. The saints did not lose sight of it. When St. Catherine of Siena read that the Pharisees had said to our Lord, "Thou art a Samaritan and hast a devil," she swooned away. Her swoon did not come from weak nerves, or hysteria. It is what would happen to you and to me if we realised how

* Faber.

awful were such words spoken *to Him*, Who was God.

To-day we will accompany our Lord and Master as He goes about healing. We will go with Him from town to town and see the sick and the maimed. Above all we will *watch Him*, noting the love and the compassion and the readiness with which He receives all who come to Him, and cures all who ask Him. His aim was to pour out His love upon men during His three years' public life, so that His children of all time may come and dwell upon the loving kindness of His actions, and by them read that Heart which never changes—the Heart of Jesus, the same to-day, yesterday, and for ever.

All the miracles that follow were not wrought in the order given. But the Evangelists themselves group together events to impress some particular trait of our Lord's character more strongly on our minds. Such good models we cannot do harm in following.

THE LEPER.

Not long after the miraculous draught of fishes, our Lord was in a town of Galilee whose name we do not know. The multitude, as usual, thronged Him on every side, straining

every nerve to see Him and to hear the words that fell from His lips. The traffic in the street was stopped as the crowd passed by. The women had left their work, the men their shops to join the multitude.

Gliding up the darkened side of the street, with noiseless tread and the startled gaze of a hunted animal, came a leper. He did not give the warning cry of "Unclean, unclean!" but cautiously advanced nearer and nearer to the only One in all Israel Who could help him. He was breaking the law, he knew, but how could he keep at a distance when all were healed. As yet he had not been noticed, though he was already within a pace of his Saviour. Suddenly the cry broke forth :

"Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean!" In an instant the horrified people gave way and dispersed. They recognised

"A leper with the ashes on his brow,
Sackcloth about his loins, and on his lip
A covering, stepping painfully and slow."*

One only stood calm and still. At His feet lay the leper, his rotting knees touching the long robe of the good Physician, his hands held up imploring mercy. What an object! The hair was white and stringy, the lips and eyelids were full of holes, the nails of feet and

* N. Willis.

hands had long since dropped off, the body was covered with scales. He was renounced by his own relations, hunted down by the townsfolk, stoned by the rabbis, an outcast of the people. Never more would he feel the touch of a mother, the kiss of a little one. To approach him was death. No wonder that piercing cry went up:

"Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean." Jesus had compassion on him: He stretched forth His hand and touched the place of the leprosy. Can you bear to look upon an open wound, a festering sore? Can you bear to touch it? Our Blessed Lord felt as you feel, and far more keenly. In His sacred body there ran nerves like those that cause you so much pain. And they made Him shrink as they make us shrink from painful sights and sounds. Yet, in order to take part with every suffering, He laid His hand even on the leper's sores.

"I will. Be thou made clean," He said, and that instant the leprosy, like a garment, fell from the man, pure blood flowed in his veins, his flesh became like the flesh of a little child. Prostrating himself on the ground, he worshipped Jesus.

"Go, show thyself to the priest," Jesus said, "and offer for thy cleansing the things that Moses commanded, for a testimony to them."

And, "being gone out, he began to publish and to blaze abroad the word."

Not many days after the cure of the leper, Jesus was again at Capharnaum. There a miracle took place which caused a stir amongst the Scribes and Pharisees.

"No room, no, not even at the door." Outside a certain house in the town stood four men with blank disappointment written on their faces. Between them, on his bed, lay a helpless paralytic, whom his friends had brought some distance to be cured. What was to be done? There was no possibility of breaking through the crowd and getting to the Messiah. Should they put him down in the shade, and wait till the assembly broke up? This did not recommend itself to them at all. The invalid was worn out already, and to leave him longer in suspense and pain was more than their kind hearts could contemplate. At last they hit upon a plan. With care and much labour the four friends managed to reach the roof of the house. There they quickly tore up the clods of baked earth, broke away a few rafters, and made a hole large enough to admit the body of a man.

Below, in the closely-packed room, surrounded by the people, the Scribes and the Pharisees, Jesus sat, and "spoke to them the

word." Suddenly all eyes were raised, for, hovering above their heads was a sick man who was being carefully lowered into their midst. The people, startled at first, lent a helping hand, and laid the paralytic at our Lord's feet.

Jesus was touched. He is always touched with an act of charity, and always rewards it. We talk about "getting round a person," by which we mean touching some tender place in their hearts, and inducing them to give us what we want. If we want to "get round" our Lord, let us do an act of charity for love of Him. There is nothing like it for touching His Heart, and once His Heart is touched, His hand will be opened, and we shall get what we want.

The paralytic looked up at our Lord, but we are not told that he said anything. They seemed to understand one another in a moment; the sick man's heaviest burden was not his sickness, nor his complete helplessness. There was unforgiven sin upon his soul, and that was harder to bear than its heavy corporal punishment. Our Lord read his heart and saw that innermost trouble. Quickly came those words of power and mercy: "Be of good heart, son, thy sins are forgiven thee." At once the heavy burden fell away, and joy filled the sick man's soul, a joy like that we feel when we hear the

words of absolution. Jesus was glad too. He loved curing the sick, healing wounds, and opening the eyes of the blind. But far more glad was He when, as on this day, He could say, "Thy sins are forgiven thee."

The Scribes and Pharisees were shocked, and thought evil in their hearts: "He blasphemeth! Who can forgive sins but God alone?" they said. Jesus knew what had passed through their minds and, with a gentleness that only the noble know, He answered:

"Why think you these things in your hearts? Which is easier to say to the sick of the palsy, 'Thy sins are forgiven thee,' or to say, 'Arise, take up thy bed, and walk?' But that you may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins," turning to the paralytic, He said, "Arise, take up thy bed, and go into thy house."

Immediately the sick man arose, took up the bed on which he had lain so long helpless and, glorifying God, went his way home. Never, perhaps, before were the people so overawed. "We never saw the like!" they said (Mark ii.) "We have seen wonderful things to-day!" (Luke v.) They were astonished and "filled with fear," and "they glorified God that gave such power to men."

Sad and awful was the sight of some of the patients brought to Jesus, like the man possessed whom we saw in the synagogue of Capharnaum, and like the demoniac of Gergesa, of whom we are going to hear now. This man was "exceeding fierce," we are told, whom "no man could bind, not even with chains. For, having been often bound with fetters and chains, he had burst the chains and broken the fetters in pieces, and no one could tame him. And he was always day and night in the monuments and in the mountains, crying and cutting himself with stones" (Mark v.) This unhappy man "ran and adored" our Lord. Think of Jesus with such a creature at His feet. Think of a mother with a son possessed by the devil—what would her sorrow be? Jesus is more than a mother to every one of us. He is our Creator; and the tie of Creator and creature is stronger than the tie between mother and child. No wonder He never lost a moment in casting out a devil. It was agony to Him to see a man made to His own image and likeness inhabited by the demon.

"Go out of the man, thou unclean spirit," Jesus said. The devil went out of him, and the man sat at our Lord's feet "well in his wits."

There is a beautiful ending to this cure.

Only too often our Lord was obliged to say to His grateful children, "See thou tell no man," lest His cures should rouse the jealous anger of the Pharisees. But of this demoniac He makes an apostle, and gives him a commission :

"Go into thy house to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had mercy on thee." And he went his way, and began to publish in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him, and all men wondered.

Once there came to Jesus a man possessed with the devil who was blind and dumb. Just think of the misery of such a man ! No beautiful sight, perhaps, had ever gladdened his eyes ; perhaps no kind word had ever reached his ears, no articulate sound ever passed his lips. Possessed too ! Jesus "healed him, so that he spoke and saw."

There was a woman who "was bowed together, neither could she look upwards at all," whom when Jesus saw, He called her unto Him, and said to her : "Woman, thou art delivered from thy infirmity." And He laid His hands upon her, and immediately she was made straight and glorified God" (Luke xiii.)

"There followed Him" one day "two blind men, crying out and saying, 'Have mercy on us,

O Son of David.' And when He was come to the house the blind men came to Him. And Jesus saith to them : ' Do you believe that I can do this unto you ? ' They say to Him, ' Yea, Lord.' Then He touched their eyes, saying, ' According to your faith be it done unto you.' And their eyes were opened, and Jesus strictly charged them, saying, ' See that no man know this.'"

Our Lord did not always wait for the sick to come to Him. Sometimes, though more rarely, He sought them out. At the feast of the Second Passover of His public life Jesus was at Jerusalem. One day He went to a pond called Probatika, which was surrounded by arches for the convenience of the sick who came there to be cured. For the waters had a miraculous power of curing by the invisible hand of an angel the first to bathe therein after the moving of the waters.

It must have been sad to see those arcades crowded with diseased people of all ages, with their wistful faces watching for the mysterious stirring of the pond, to see the selfish rush for the first plunge, the disappointment of the many, the glad surprise of only one.

This Paschal season our Lord visited the Probatika Pond and saw there a great multitude of "sick, of blind, of lame, of withered." Among these sufferers He was drawn towards

the most miserable and most forsaken. "There was a certain man there that had been eight-and-thirty years under his infirmity.

"'Wilt thou be made whole?' our Lord asked.

"'Sir,' the infirm man answered, 'I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pond. For whilst I am coming, another goeth down before me.' Jesus said to him :

"'Arise, take up thy bed, and walk.' And immediately the man was made whole, and he took up his bed and walked." Thirty-eight years sick and helpless ! without a friend in the world, and suddenly strong, active, able to work ! What a change ! and wrought by one word from our Lord ! Straight to the Temple went the happy man to give thanks to God. There Jesus found him, and gave him one word of warning : " Behold, thou art made whole ; sin no more, lest some worse thing happen to thee."

JAIRUS' DAUGHTER.

The Second Year of the Public Life.

In a grand mansion in Capernaum a child lay dying. She was scarcely twelve years old, the joy of her father's heart. All that love and science could do to preserve her life had been done, and all to no purpose, life was ebbing

fast. Beside the bed her father and mother were watching in an agony of grief. Must they let her die? Was there none to help? Suddenly the thought of Jesus of Nazareth came into the father's mind. He was in Capharnaum. If He were brought to the bedside, He would cure her. But not a moment was there to lose; in a short time it would be too late. Every breath might be her last. Jairus trusted none with the message; his foot was fleetier than that of the fleetest slave. Through the city he hurried, and traced our Lord to the house of Levi, the publican. A banquet was being held in the large hall, and sounds of laughter jarred on his ear. But heeding nothing he entered, and making his way to the couch of honour threw himself at our Lord's feet.

"Lord, my daughter is at the point of death. Come, lay Thy hand upon her, that she may be safe, and may live."

How long his absence seemed to the mother, kneeling close to the dying child. She watched each breath as it came, felt each pulse, noted the death-drops gathering on the forehead. All was quiet outside. Would the sound of footsteps never break on her ear? Had Jesus left Capharnaum? Why did He linger so? Had He no mercy for her? But the hard thought

was repelled. She hoped in Him and believed. She would hope to the last. See, the little head has fallen backward, the eyes are glazed, the last breath has come and gone. "She is dead," the women whispered, and a messenger was sent off at once to Jairus to tell him not to trouble the Master, for all was over.

The mother was led out of the room by gentle hands, the wailing women entered, the corpse was prepared for the burial. There were sounds now in the road—a multitude coming. Yes, Jairus was there, and Jesus. Had the messenger missed them? Did He not know it was too late? The mother hastened to the threshold, and caught the gleam of hope in her husband's eye, saw with quick instinct that Jesus had come with mercy and with power. A new and stronger faith rose in her soul. Could He, would He raise the dead to life?

"Why make you this ado?" Jesus asked the hired mourners; "the maid is not dead, but sleepeth." "They laughed Him to scorn." Did they not know their own business? could they not tell the dead from the living? But Jesus was Master in that house. "Having put them all out" He entered the house with Peter, James, and John, and the mother and father of the child. What a moment of expectation, of hope, and fear, and doubting! Was the Master

deceived, did He think her only dying? Would He look at the rigid figure and say, "You have called Me too late, the child is dead"? Or was death as sleep to Him Who was the author of life?

Jesus took the little hand in His and said: "'Talitha cumi; damsel, arise!'" And the damsel rose up and walked," holding on to the hand that had raised her. Speechless and awe-struck the father and mother stood watching. Could that little thing moving with such ease and grace be the child that lay stiff and white upon the bier? Yes, for He in Whom all things live and move and have their being had given back the life He had taken for awhile.

"Give her something to eat," Jesus said, as if reading their thoughts; and turning from the grateful parents, He went out once more into the street.

THE SYRO-PHENICIAN WOMAN.

Third Year of Our Lord's Ministry.

Find Phenicia. It is a strip of land on the sea-coast. In the time of our Lord it formed part of the Roman Province of Syria. Its inhabitants were mostly pagans and worshipped a goddess called Astarte. Even to this land, far off in the north, our Lord journeyed, because He knew that one in sorrow wanted Him.

"He would that no man should know it, and He could not be hid," St. Mark tells us. A woman of the country heard of His arrival, and seeing Him pass by her house, cried out with a loud voice: "Have mercy on me, O Lord, Thou Son of David; my daughter is grievously tormented by a devil." Jesus passed on and "answered her not a word." If ever our Lord seems to treat us as He treated that poor woman and *answers not a word*, even when we pray our best, let us do as she did and cry the louder. So loud was her cry of faith that the disciples were distressed, and begged our Lord to dismiss her.

"I was not sent but to the sheep that are lost of the house of Israel," was His answer. But she "fell down at His feet" and adored Him, saying, "Lord, help me!" *She* was not sick, but her mother's heart was wrung by her daughter's sufferings as for her own. Who could have looked on that sad face and not have been moved with pity? But Jesus showed no sign of compassion:

"It is not good to take the bread of children, and to cast it to the dogs." But she said:

"Yea, Lord; for the whelps also eat of the crumbs that fall from the table of their masters." Only a dog she owned, but then good masters feed even their dogs. Jesus was touched:

"O woman, great is thy faith; be it done to

thee as thou wilt." The woman rose from her knees and went into her house. Her daughter lay quiet and peaceful on her bed. The devil had gone out of her.

This was the first and only time that our Lord showed reluctance to grant a prayer. And this time it was only seeming reluctance. He wanted to bring out the humility and persevering faith of the heathen woman, and to show His own disciples and us how the prayer He *must hear* is to be prayed.

Never could we tell all the cures our Blessed Lord wrought. The Evangelists heap them together. St. John tells us : " There are also many other things which Jesus did, which if they were written every one, the world itself, I think, would not be able to contain the books that should be written."

St. Matthew has in one place : " There came to Him great multitudes, having with them the dumb, the lame, the maimed, and many others, and they cast them down at His feet, and He healed them. So that the multitude marvelled seeing the dumb speak, the lame walk, the blind see ; and they glorified the God of Israel."

" For He healed many, as many as had evils. And the unclean spirits when they saw Him, fell down before Him, and they cried, saying : , Thou art the Son of God ! ' "

“And all the multitude sought to touch Him, for virtue went from Him and healed all.”

Why did our Lord work so many cures? There are many reasons. Like all His miracles they were proofs of His Divinity, and they were fulfilment of prophecy. But they were more than this. By them He taught in act what He taught in word: “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, *and thy neighbour as thyself.*” Charity is almost as hard to practise as humility; for some it is harder. So our Lord impressed it upon us as He impressed humility—by word and example. The world is cruel still, men say. But nowhere is there cruelty now as there was before our Lord came. From whom have men and women learnt to nurse the sick and tend the lepers, to have compassion on idiots and the diseased, except from our Lord Himself? There are old doctors now and young ones too, who handle their most repulsive patients with a gentle reverence that reminds us of Him Who went about doing good. The poor are housed in sunny rooms, lie on clean beds, are watched at night, and tended and cared for as the best in the land. Sometimes this love is only love of neighbour, and there is in it no love of God. But if ever a natural virtue could win a supernatural grace, it would be love for the poor and miserable.

XXVI.

WITH SINNERS.

“And coming He preached peace to you that were afar off.”—EPH. ii.

How tender and compassionate our Lord was towards sick people and those in sorrow we know, but how infinitely tender and compassionate He was towards sinners we have still to learn. He shed tears for the sorrow-stricken; but for sinners He shed His blood. By the touch of His hand He cured the loathsome sore, but by wounds in hands and feet and side He healed the diseases of the soul. “The Son of man is come,” He said, “to save that which was lost” (Matt. xvii.), as if all His other works were nothing compared to that of bringing back souls that had gone astray.

A lost soul means one separated from Him for all eternity. To a mother who loves her child, separation is a hard trial, and death, because it is a long separation, is the hardest trial of all. Jesus loves souls as no human being ever loved, and He yearned after His children with a yearning that no mother could even understand. To Him, therefore, that

death of souls which means eternal separation was the shadow that darkened every joy of His life.

One day, in an agony of sorrow, Jesus stretched out His hands towards Jerusalem, the cruellest city on the face of the earth. "Jerusalem, Jerusalem," He cried; "thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee; how often would I have gathered together thy children, as the hen doth gather her chickens under her wings, and thou wouldst not." It was not the awful doom which awaited its inhabitants that made Him give out that cry of anguish. It was the thought of the eternal separation of souls from Himself that pierced His heart.

To save all from this separation He tried to win the hearts of sinners, and to bind them to Himself by strong ties of love. He Who was "holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and made higher than the heavens" (Heb. vii.), was called "the friend of publicans and sinners." And He seemed to glory in the title. He welcomed them to Him with loving-kindness. For them He had no reproofs. "*They drew near Him,*" we are told, and when they invited Him to their table, He accepted the invitation and sat amongst them as one of themselves. Indeed, He did not always wait for an invitation. "Zacheus," He said to a chief of the

publicans, "make haste and come down, for to-day *I must* abide in thy house." And Zacheus made haste and came down from the sycamore into which he had climbed to see our Saviour pass, and joyfully took Him into his house. "Behold," said the people who saw Him enter, "He is gone to be the guest of a man that is a sinner." The words were true. Zacheus was a sinner, and for that very reason Jesus had come to seek him. But when our Lord left his house he was a sinner no longer. "This day is salvation come to this house. . . . For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."

No one who came to Jesus, however wicked, was ever repulsed by Him. For Magdalen, the sinner, He had pity and forgiveness ; for Peter, a look of tender reproach ; for His executioners, a cry for mercy ; for the penitent thief, a royal pardon. There was another sinner, a hard, unrepentant man, and to him Jesus clung to the last moment of His life. This man was Judas, the traitor and thief. He received our Saviour's last kiss, and was called by Him His "friend."

Our Lord knows that those who sin find it hard to believe in God's willingness to receive them back, to believe in His forgiveness, to trust His mercy. So He invented stories full of loving-kindness to the lost and fallen, that

by this means He might show forth in a human way His own burning love for man.

“Now the publicans and sinners drew near unto Him. . . . And He spoke to them this parable, saying :

“‘What man of you that has a hundred sheep, and if he shall lose one of them, doth he not leave the ninety-nine in the desert and go after that which was lost until he find it ; and when he has found it, lay it upon his shoulders rejoicing ; and coming home, call together his friends and neighbours, saying to them : “ Rejoice with me, because I have found my sheep that was lost ” ? I say to you, that even so there shall be joy in Heaven upon one sinner that doth penance, more than upon ninety-nine just who need not penance.’”

This is a beautiful story. The Shepherd goes after the silly sheep, not until He has searched the woods, the valleys, and rocky places, nor until night falls, nor until He is weary, *but until He finds it. He lays it upon His shoulders.* This is not His way with His other sheep. He leads the way for them, and they follow as best they may. But this is a strayed sheep, a wanderer, and the rule for others is no rule for it. It is lifted into the good Shepherd's arms and carried on His shoulder, far out of the reach of briars and

thorns, and is borne quickly back into the fold, lest it should again grow weary of the right road. *Rejoicing!* This is the word that reveals the love of the Shepherd. He rejoices for the sheep's sake, because it is safe from the cruel wolf, because it is safe in the fold, His to protect, to feed, to guide.

Our Lord did not explain this parable. He did not say : I am the good Shepherd and the strayed sheep is the sinner. He read the hearts of His listeners, and He knew there was not one there who had not understood. Only one word He added at the end to tell us something we never could have guessed had He not revealed it. "*There shall be joy in Heaven upon one sinner that doth penance.*" Joy in Heaven ! Heaven is the place for joy, but that there should be joy there because one poor sinner does penance ! Could we believe it, unless God Himself had told us ? "What is there between me and thee ?" we might ask. What is our salvation to the heavenly hosts ? Our Lord tells us, it is *a joy* to them. Then they must love us. They do love us ; they see how God has set His heart upon each one of us, and has given us His only-begotten Son, and has purchased us at a great price, and when they see one soul rescued they rejoice. Oh, who could feel lonely and uncared for and forgotten, when in Heaven there are legions of

angels knowing us, loving us, and rejoicing over our victories, when God Himself rejoices in us ! To think we can add a joy to the bliss of Heaven, *we* children, little human creatures beneath the notice of great men of this world !

THE PRODIGAL SON.

This is the parable which of all others touches most our human hearts, and shows us how our Father in Heaven loves His wandering children, and how compassionately and exultingly He welcomes them back when they return to Him. Our Blessed Lord told this story on the same day as the "Lost Sheep," and to the publicans and sinners who had *drawn near to Him*.

"A certain man had two sons, and the younger of them said to his father : 'Father, give me the portion of substance that falleth to me.' And he divided unto them his substance. And not many days after, the younger son, gathering all together, went abroad into a far country, and there wasted his substance, living riotously.

"And after he had spent all, there came a mighty famine in that country, and he began to be in want. And he went and cleaved to one of the citizens of that country ; and he sent him into his farm to feed swine. And he

would fain have filled his belly with the husks the swine did eat, and no man gave unto him.

“And returning to himself he said: ‘How many servants in my father’s house abound with bread, and I here perish with hunger! I will arise and will go to my father, and say to him: “Father, I have sinned against Heaven and before thee; I am not worthy to be called thy son, make me as one of thy hired servants.”’”

“And rising up he came to his father. And when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him and was moved with compassion, and running to him fell upon his neck and kissed him. And the son said to him: ‘Father, I have sinned against Heaven and before thee, I am not now worthy to be called thy son.’ And the father said to the servants: ‘Bring forth quickly the first robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet; and bring hither the fatted calf and kill it; and let us eat and make merry, because this my son was dead and is come to life again, was lost and is found.’”

We do not want to be told who that father is, and who is the son. We know them. We only want to think the story over, and bring home its lesson to ourselves. Please God we are not prodigals, and by His mercy and power may hope never to be. But should so terrible

a misfortune happen to us, let us keep in our hearts this picture of the infinite compassion and love of our Heavenly Father. And if ever our heaped-up sins frighten us, let us turn to Him Who keeps the "first robe" and the "ring," and Who is only waiting for a distant glimpse of our return to meet us and fall upon our neck and kiss us.

Watch the young man going from his father's house with the portion of the younger son. He is in high spirits, for he thinks he has all that his heart can desire—money, youth, and liberty. Life at home was so humdrum, his elder brother so tame, his father so precise—he could stand it no longer. In the gay life before him there will be no call to prayer at regular and frequent intervals, no good example to make him feel uncomfortable, no advice thrust upon him just when he wants to enjoy himself. Far away he wanders, the farther the better. He does not want messengers sent after him, inquiries made about his conduct, or rumours of his doings reaching home. "And he lived riotously." Pleasure by day and pleasure by night; a feast to-day, another to-morrow, music and laughter, wine and merriment. So lived the prodigal. But a morning came and he found himself a penniless beggar. He looked to his friends for help, but they did

not know him now. Even the places of his rioting and dissipation are shut against him. Day by day he sinks lower into wickedness.

Famished, desolate, and degraded, he thinks of his father's house, of the peace and the comfort there—of the very servants abounding with bread. The thought of his misery brings back the thought of his father, and of his father's goodness. He will trust to his goodness and go back to him. He will go back and be as a hired servant. He will tell his father how wicked he has been ; he will give up the title of son, for he does not deserve it, and will ask to be taken back to work at a fixed wage, content to be kept at a distance, liable to be dismissed at any time, with no rights, no privileges. "Father," he will say, "I have sinned against Heaven and before thee ; I am not now worthy to be called thy son make me as one of thy hired servants."

With tattered garments and shoeless feet, broken down in mind and body, the boy rises from his miserable surroundings and takes the road home. So far away it seems, and he so feeble, will he ever reach it by himself? Never. His strength will fail long before he sees the home of his childhood. But see—a *great way off*, there stands one watching. It is his father—the prodigal knows him ; no other could be so moved with compassion for

the spendthrift coming home. He is hastening over the distance that separates them. They meet. The boy, humbled to the dust, sinks on his knees to confess his sins. "Father," he sobs, "I have sinned against Heaven and before thee; I am not now worthy to be called thy son." But the father falls on his neck and kisses him. He takes the robe of snowy whiteness and clothes his long-lost son; on his finger he places the ring of heirship, and calling together his friends, rejoices: "Because this my son was dead and is come to life again, was lost and is found."

A holy prelate went to preach to some English prisoners. He chose for his subject the Prodigal Son. No sooner was the text given out than a sullen look of disgust was seen on the countenances of the men. They were tired of the Prodigal Son, every one preached the Prodigal Son at them, and they did not want to hear any more of him. But the preacher shared his Master's love of souls and spoke so tenderly of the love of God for sinners and of His compassion for the fallen that the sullen looks disappeared, and here and there a coat sleeve was brushed across the eyes. That day hard hearts were softened, for the tale of God's love was told by one who shared

His love, and there was brought back to the fallen sinners the long-lost hope that even for them, outcasts upon earth, there was a Father's love in Heaven.

XXVII.

THE KING'S STORIES.

“I will open My mouth in parables.”—MATT. xxiv.

“Jesus sat by the sea-side and great multitudes were gathered together unto Him.” But as they approached He rose sadly, and turning from them, got into a little boat that lay close up to the shore. There was to be no “thronging” and “pressing” upon Him that day, as there had been so often before. He would speak to them, for He could not send them away. But He would speak from a distance, and His doctrine should be hidden in parables. Parables are stories of common things with a spiritual meaning. To those who were not spiritual, such parables would seem childish, foolish even. But to His friends, the simple and humble of heart, they would be full of light and life.

The people felt that our Lord's manner towards them was different from what it had ever been before, and they listened to His stories with perplexed wonder.

“Behold,” He said, “the sower went forth to

sow. And whilst he sowed, some fell by the wayside, and the birds of the air came and ate them up. And other some fell upon stony ground, where they had not much earth, and they sprang up immediately, because they had no deepness of earth. And when the sun was up they were scorched, and because they had not root they withered away. And others fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. And others fell upon good ground; and they brought forth fruit, some a hundredfold, some sixty fold, and some thirty fold."

Our Lord paused.

There was a dead silence. "He who has ears to hear, let him hear," He said. The men looked from one to another; they were puzzled. What were they to make of this story? What was its meaning, if it had any? Why did their Master talk to them in such hidden language? The Apostles heard the murmuring and came to our Lord:

"Master," they said, "why do you all of a sudden speak to these people in parables?" Jesus looked tenderly upon the speakers. They were the good ground, they were to hear and understand:

"Blessed are your eyes," He said, "and blessed are your ears. . . . To you it is given to know the mysteries of the Kingdom

of Heaven, but to them it is not given. . . .
For the heart of this people is grown gross,
and with their ears they have been dull of
hearing, and their eyes they have shut. . . .
Hear you therefore the parable of the sower."

Then our Lord explained His parable to the Apostles.

The seed, He told them, is the word of God. It falls upon hearts cold and hard as the wayside, and the devil snatches at it and carries it quickly away. It falls upon the hearts of the pleasure-loving and its beauty attracts them. They listen and obey for a time, but a sudden temptation comes and the weak attempt is given up. The word withers and dies like the grain that fell on the rock. It falls on hearts full of worldly cares. Thoughts of business, of success, of disappointment rush in and settle down. The heart of man is small, there is not room for everything, so the word of God gets crushed out, choked like the seed amongst thorns. But the word fell also upon good and very good hearts, and it sank deep, and was thought over and prayed about. Good resolutions were made, temptations were battled with, and the victory was won. One victory made another easier, made the eye quick to detect evil, the will stronger to resist, the temper more hopeful. So these good hearts brought forth fruit according to the measure of their gener-

osity—some thirty, some sixty, some a hundred fold.

Almost immediately after this story our Lord told another.

“The Kingdom of Heaven is likened to a man that sowed good seed in his field. But while men were asleep his enemy came and oversowed cockle among the wheat, and went his way. And when the blade was sprung up, and had brought forth fruit, there appeared also the cockle. And the servants of the house coming said to him :

“‘Sir, didst thou not sow good seed in thy field? Whence, then, hath it cockle?’ And he said to them :

“‘An enemy hath done this.’ And the servants said to him :

“‘Wilt thou that we go and gather it up?’ And he said :

“‘No, lest perhaps, gathering up the cockle, you root up the wheat also together with it. Suffer both to grow until the harvest, and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers : “Gather up first the cockle, and bind it into bundles to burn, but the wheat gather ye into my barn.”’”

Jesus rose and left the multitude without offering them a word of explanation. The Apostles, when quite by themselves, gathered

round Him and asked the meaning of the parable He had just told them. There is one thing to be noted about the Apostles, they were never ashamed of showing their ignorance. If they did not know a thing, they said so ; if they wanted an explanation they asked for it ; if they were puzzled they told Him their perplexity. They did not know how to pray, so they asked to be taught. "Lord, teach us how to pray," they said. Another time, at the Last Supper, they could not follow our Lord's heavenly thoughts, and so quite simply they told Him so : "Lord, we know not whither Thou goest, and how can we know the way ?" That morning they had made as little of the "Sower and his seed" as the rest of the people, but, unlike them, they had asked for an explanation. And now this other parable of the "Cockle" is more than they can manage by themselves, though they have thought it over and have done their best to understand it. "Explain to us the parable of the cockle and the field," they said.

"He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man. And the field is the world. And the good seed are the children of the kingdom. And the cockle are the children of the wicked one. And the enemy that sowed them is the devil. But the harvest is the end of the world. And the reapers are the angels. Even as cockle

therefore is gathered up and burnt with fire, so shall it be at the end of the world. The Son of man shall send His angels, and they shall gather out of His kingdom all scandals and them that work iniquity, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the just shine as the sun in the kingdom of their Father."

"Have you understood all these things?" our Lord asks. Very thoughtfully the Apostles answer :

"Yes."

Why had our Lord changed His way of teaching the multitude? For months past He had been travelling throughout Galilee, always speaking openly, disguising none of His sacred mysteries. Why then, now, at the end of His second missionary circuit, did He speak, as it were, in riddles?

Recall the cockle and the corn. The sower was our Lord Himself. And the enemy? Our Lord's enemies were numerous, and all allies of the devil. But these particular enemies of His were the Pharisees, the learned Sanhedrists, the Scribes, and Sadducees. They came from Jerusalem full of envy and hatred against Him, and, following in His footsteps, did their best to turn the people from Him. "He is mad," they

said. "He casts out devils by Beelzebub. Why are you so foolish as to run after Him?" Little by little the poison spread. The ignorant, gross-minded peasants of Galilee listened to their masters. The simple reverence for our Lord died out of the hearts of many, and they listened to Him coldly or impatiently. It was a sad thing for our Lord to suffer. "An enemy hath done this," He said. Then He changed His way of speaking. The proud who came to listen should hear and not understand, the humble should hear and take in mysteries far out of the reach of the human mind. And so it came about that He spoke in parables, as had been prophesied of Him: "I will open My mouth in parables. I will utter things hidden from the foundation of the world."

Since the people of Capharnaum and Bethsaida and of the country round about were so ungrateful, we might imagine our Lord would cease working miracles and teaching, and that, going away with His Apostles and those who believed in Him, He would leave the stubborn, stiff-necked Jews alone.

Quite the opposite happened, and it is just in circumstances like these that we see how different are our Lord's ways from ours. "Seeing the multitudes He had compassion on them, because they were distressed and crying like

sheep that have no shepherd" (Matt. ix.) Hitherto He alone had been preaching and healing and comforting the people. But now He can bear to see their sufferings no longer, and He gives His powers to His twelve. They shall carry His doctrine and His grace and His tender compassion to the people who "are distressed." They have turned against Him, it is true, but He cannot bear to see them suffer, so He bids the Apostles go forth into the towns and villages and do for them just what they have seen Him do.

Before sending them off He gives them instructions. They are to go two and two; they are to take no extra clothing. "Do not possess gold, nor silver, nor money in your purses, nor scrip for your journey, nor bread, nor two coats, nor shoes, nor a staff, for the workman is worthy of his hire. And into whatsoever town you shall enter, inquire who in it is worthy, and there abide till you go thence. . . . Behold I send you as sheep in the midst of wolves. Be ye therefore wise as serpents and simple as doves." They would suffer because they were the disciples of a Master Who suffered, and "The disciple is not above the Master, nor the servant above the Lord." But they were not to be anxious nor fear, for He said: "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? And not one of them shall fall

to the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not, therefore; better are you than many sparrows."

Joyfully, full of confidence in our Lord's words, the Apostles set off. "They preached that men should do penance, and they cast out many devils, and anointed with oil many that were sick and healed them." They spared themselves no labour, they toiled as they had seen their Master toil, and they pinched themselves in food and clothing and rest, as they had seen Him do. All the while He was blessing their doings from afar, inspiring them with the right thing to say, giving weight to their words. Two and two they went—Peter and John joining company, no doubt, for their intense love of our Lord bound them together and made their way of working one; Philip with Andrew or with his friend Nathaniel.

But what about Judas? Did he receive the same mission as the other Apostles? It seems he did. If so, he must have healed the sick miraculously and cast out devils, for our Lord made no exception in the gifts He gave. Perhaps Judas' heart was still good, and yet, and yet—it can hardly be. For very soon there comes a groan from our Lord's lips: "Amen, I say to you, one of you is a devil."

We must leave the Apostles now and go down to Judea, cross the Jordan, and enter the great fortress-palace of Herod Antipas. An awful deed is to be committed there.

XXVIII.

A DARK DEED.

“O Lord, I cry out to Thee, suffering violence.”—
HAB. i.

THE principal hall in the Castle of Macheronte was brilliantly lighted up. The marble pillars glistened, the tessellated floor shot out many coloured rays. The air was laden with the perfume of costly spices. It was Herod's birthday, and the Tetrarch, King in all but name, gloried in the magnificence of an almost royal state. Rich silk-covered divans ran round the centre of the hall, leaving a wide open space in the midst. Slaves had removed the banqueting tables, and the guests had thrown themselves back upon their cushions to enjoy a spectacle prepared for them by Herodias, Herod's so-called wife.

Herod Antipas, in purple robe and jewelled turban, was the centre of the group. We looked upon the face of his father, you remember. It was wicked, but it was strong; his son's is wicked and weak. Herod the Great, bad as he was, had some great qualities; Antipas had not any. He was covetous and avaricious, suspicious and cunning—“fox,” our Blessed Lord

called him. Religion he had none ; he pretended to despise all forms of religion, for none suited his way of living. On either side of his couch reclined the chief men of Galilee—military officers, courtiers, young nobles—as worthless and as dissipated as himself. Behind his couch stood, with unsheathed sword, the executioner, prepared, even in the midst of revelry, to take life at a moment's notice.

Presently the heavy hangings over the doorway were drawn back and a number of young girls of noble birth entered the hall. Their leader, scarcely more than a child, was the daughter of Herodias. And she had come with her companions to entertain the King and his guests with her Grecian dances.

Soft tambourine music accompanied the movements of the dancers. These were exquisitely trained, every step was in time, every gesture was full of ease and grace. But of all the dancers there not one could compare with Salome, the royal maiden. The eyes of the guests were riveted upon her, and when her last round was finished she was greeted by a wild shout of applause that rang through the hall. Herod, beside himself with delight, swore to give her anything she liked to ask—even the half of his kingdom.

Salome had had her instructions. She left the hall and came to her mother's apartments,

and told her that Herod, excited with wine, had promised to give her anything she asked. This was Herodias' hour. Down below, in the dark dungeons of the keep, John the Baptist lay a prisoner. He was her deadly enemy, for he had dared publicly to declare that she was not the King's lawful wife. Full of dread that perhaps John in the end would induce Herod to send her away, the ambitious Queen had whispered into Herod's ear that John must die. Hitherto her request had not been granted, for Herod feared the people. But now his word was pledged; he had sworn before all his guests to grant any petition the dancing girl might make. A few whispered words between mother and daughter, and back *in haste* Salome tripped to do her mother's bidding.

"*I want that you give me at once in a dish the head of John the Baptist.*" The voice was hard, the face of the young speaker unmoved, yet she was asking for the death of one who had never injured her, of whom she had heard nothing but good. Herod, bad as he was, felt shocked. The awful request sobered him. He revolted from a deed that would cause a shudder of horror throughout his kingdom. But his oaths! and the vicious company around him—what would be said? Very reluctantly he turned to the attendant standing at his elbow and gave the order.

The feast went on as before—more music, more wine, more revelry. At length the curtain was again drawn back and the headsmen entered, carrying in his hands a wooden trencher. Upon it lay the bleeding head of the holy martyr. The deed was done, the promise kept; John the Baptist was dead, Herodias revenged. The daughter gave her mother the reward of her dance.

What passed between our Lord, far off in Galilee, and His Precursor in the hot darkness of the prison? When the last hour came what help did He send him, what grace to go through his martyrdom? We do not know. But this we know, there never was a friend so faithful as our Lord, so watchful to foresee and provide for those in trouble, and pain, and danger. He could not therefore be wanting to one who had spent his life for Him, and had died to uphold that word of His: "What God has joined together, let no man put asunder."

The broken-hearted disciples of John came to the prison and asked for the body of their master. With great reverence and love they embalmed it and bore it away to a tomb they had prepared in the neighbourhood, and then they went—where did they go? They went "and told Jesus."

FIVE THOUSAND FED.

Bright-faced and joyous the twelve came back from the north and the west to our Lord. Their mission was over ; they had gone through the villages and towns he had allotted them ; they had healed the sick and had given freely what they had freely received. In doing good to others they had done good to themselves ; their hearts were softened by relieving misery. Of course they were tired, but they had so much to tell our Lord and wanted so much to tell it that they scarcely felt their fatigue. We might remind ourselves, by the way, that this *telling our Lord* that the Apostles found such a relief was *prayer*, and that they who found it so easy and delightful were by no means saints at the time.

From the south that same day came another company of men, with no joy in their faces, no brightness in their eyes. They were coming to our Lord because they were sorrowful, just as the Apostles had come because they were glad. These men were John's disciples. They had but now buried their master, and their hearts were heavy with grief.

Our Lord welcomed each—the sorrowful with tender compassion, the joyful with congratulation and a loving warning for fear they should be too much set up. Now He wanted them all

to Himself for awhile, so He invited them to cross the lake with Him. "Come with Me and rest," He said. The Apostles must have felt like school-boys going out for a picnic. On their own dear lake, the only place where they were safe from the multitude, with our Lord all to themselves—how they could pour out their hearts to Him!

They set sail; our Lord steered towards the north-western shore, past the place where the Jordan rushes into the lake; on to a little creek where landing was easy. The boat made fast, the Apostles jumped on shore. Still westward they directed their steps to a grassy hill in a desert place.

Meanwhile, the people on the other shore missed our Lord, and watched with a pang of disappointment the boat glide out into the open sea. There were no other boats at hand, so they set off running—boys, women, children, men—a whole multitude racing the boat as it cut noiselessly through the water. Close to the shore the men kept, rounded the northern corner, crossed the ford, and stood watching the landing of the little company. In slower procession came the sick, the old, and the weakly.

Jesus seated amongst His Twelve seemed intent upon them only, as if His whole attention were taken up with their doings; but He knew the multitude was slowly advancing and that

they wanted Him. He could not send them away, they must come and be welcomed. His own must not show that they were not wanted. Nearer and nearer they came, the little children first, panting for breath, then the men, planting their staves firmly in the stony ground. Then, helped by the kindly, came the sick with faces so wan that our Lord began His work of charity with them. Poor Apostles! no more rest now; they were always expected to do the honours. But lately they had been well practised in works of self-denial and they set to work with willing hearts and ready hands.

When all were healed, Jesus talked to them of the Kingdom of God, and they listened with rapt attention. The day passed, no one heeded the time; the sun mounted the heavens and began his descent in the west, sending his slanting rays over the lake, but Jesus spoke on. Great orators have kept their audience listening spellbound for four hours and more, but our Lord kept the people listening to Him throughout the day—the people mind. Great orators have had educated listeners, disciplined minds. But our Lord's listeners were children, boys and girls, working men and women.

When at length Jesus ceased speaking, the Apostles came to Him. The giant shadows thrown by the hills, the supper hour long passed, made them uneasy. Here they were in a wil-

derness, with no means of procuring provisions, surrounded by an immense multitude that had not tasted food since morning. What must be done? They must be got rid of, and that as soon as possible.

"Lord, send them away," the Apostles said, "that, going into the next villages and towns, they may buy themselves bread." His answer astonished them :

"They have no need to go ; give you them to eat." Our Lord was not jesting. If the Apostles had obeyed Him with simple faith they would have had the power to give "*them to eat.*" They had just come back from working miracles, and this feeding of a few thousands was not one whit more difficult than healing, and less difficult than expelling evil spirits. But they stood before our Lord as stolid as if they had never heard of a miracle or seen one performed. There was no bread, so it could not be given—a practical conclusion, but not a supernatural one.

Our Lord turned to Philip and said :

"Whence shall we buy bread that these may eat?" This He said to try him, for He Himself knew what He would do. Philip was perplexed not so much as to "whence" but as to "how much" it would cost. He made a rough calculation and then answered:

"Two hundred pennyworth (£7) of bread is

not sufficient for them, that every one may take a little." The answer must have made Judas shudder; he kept the purse and knew that its contents were always liable to be given away to the needy.

Our Lord tried again :

"How many loaves have you? Go and see." Andrew obeyed quickly.

"There is a boy here that hath five barley loaves and two fishes, but what are these among so many?" What indeed! Thousands of hearty men, women and children innumerable, and only five barley loaves, flat, crisp unsubstantial things, and two *small* fishes not much bigger probably than sardines. Of course the thing was impossible.

"Bring them hither to Me," our Lord said. Andrew brought the boy up to our Lord. Have you ever thought what it cost that hungry boy to give up his provisions? Even supposing he was not hungry, he could still have made a good deal out of his bread and fishes by selling them. But he gave them up into our Lord's hands without a word.

The multitude were to *sit*, our Lord said, there where the grass was green and thick, and *in companies* of hundreds and fifties. They obeyed like children and arranged themselves just where and how the Apostles told them. It was a strange command, no doubt. But the

people were not prudent when our Lord was concerned. They ought, if they had reasoned in a human way, to have taken their little children by the hand and have turned homewards as fast as they could. What was the use of sitting on the grass hungry and cold. They did not say this. Our Lord was going to do something for them they thought. So they sat quietly waiting in the evening air with their white and coloured robes looking like the bright flowers in the spring meadows around.

Jesus stood in sight of all; in His Divine hands He held the bread and fishes, He looked up to Heaven, He blessed them, and broke them into large portions and handed them to the Apostles to set before the people. To and fro they went, in and out of the orderly company, with their arms laden, giving to heads of families sufficient for each of their party, passing none over, hurrying none, coming back again and again to our Lord for more supplies. It was back-aching work, and the Apostles themselves were hungry; but it was delightful to see the famished children eat, and the men say how good it tasted, and all praise our Lord with grateful, wondering hearts. At last all were satisfied; the little ones shook the crumbs out of their laps and showed by their talk that their hunger was appeased.

Jesus had been watching the scene, and serving

Himself those who were nearest to Him (St. John). Now he ordered the fragments to be gathered up. All helped, and very soon the twelve baskets belonging to the Apostles were filled with what remained of five barley loaves and two fishes after five thousand men besides women and children had been fed!

A whisper circulated amongst the men, they stood in groups gesticulating and talking rapidly: "This is of a truth the prophet that is to come into the world." You remember that the Jews believed their Messiah would spread for them a miraculous banquet. This meal they had just eaten was surely miraculous. Was this a sign that the Prophet had come?

"We will take Him and proclaim Him King," they said. Our Lord stood by reading their hearts. He watched the excitement the hot-headed crowd was arousing in His own Twelve. They were elated at *their* Master's popularity, overjoyed to see the crowd appreciate Him so. Now was the time for His exaltation if only He were willing. But our Lord was not willing. He called His Apostles and told them to embark at once and cross over to Bethsaida. They hesitated to leave Him, but He obliged them, and giving Him the usual parting salutation they got into the boat.

Then Jesus faced the crowd, and quieting their excitement by His calm, decided manner,

dismissed them to their homes. Left by Himself, He went up "into the mountain Himself alone." All alone with His Heavenly Father He spent the whole night. His Heart was above with God; His face was raised looking Homeward. The watches of the night changed, but our Lord did not move. He had so much to say, so many to pray for, so many graces to obtain for His children of all time and of all nations.

He heard the rushing sea below and the angry wind beating on the waves and knew His Apostles were in danger. Louder than wind and water was the cry of those terrified fishermen to our Lord's Heart. But not till morning began to dawn did He leave the mountain-top and go to their assistance. In a few moments He was in sight of the boat. Was it the light of the rising sun that lit up His face and figure, or was it the light of the Godhead shining through His mortal body? The Apostles saw and trembled. Clutching the side of the boat they strained their eyes to make out what was the sight they saw.

"It is an apparition," they said at last, and trembling the more, cried out in their terror. Then above the sound of the tempest came the voice they loved so well:

"Be of good heart. It is I, fear not." Peter still anxiously watching, answered back:

"Lord, if it be Thou, bid me to come to Thee upon the water."

"Come," our Lord answered. What could He say but "Come," to one who showed such simple trust in His power! Down the ship's side slid Peter and touched with his feet the boisterous waves, and made directly for the bright figure. But he had overrated his courage. In the boat the storm had been bad enough and he had been terrified, but on the open sea it was ten times worse. The waves dashed up against him and the wind blustered around. His heart failed him, he forgot our Lord's presence and His word of invitation, "Come"; he forgot all but his danger. He felt himself sinking!

"Lord," he shouted, "save me! I perish." That instant our Lord took his hand and raised him, all dripping, to the surface.

"O thou of little faith," He said, "why didst thou doubt?" Peter's only answer was to take a firmer hold on the Divine hand. He was safe. The wind might howl and the sea might rock, that hand was all he wanted. Love may make great strides in a short time, and Peter's love grew tenfold as he walked by his Master's side on the rolling sea.

They got into the boat together. A great calm came upon the water. It sank to rest like a weary thing. The wind fell, and the ship,

guided by its Divine Pilot, came instantly to land. Now at last the eyes of the Apostles were opened. They had not understood the miracle of the bread and the loaves; "*their hearts were blinded,*" but they did understand this miracle. It had to do with the sea whose perils they knew so well, and with the boat whose management was their only science. With our Lord at the helm, they had rowed three miles in a few moments, alone they had laboured the whole night through and had scarcely made as many; they had seen Him walk the waters as dry land, and rescue Peter with the touch of His hand. Falling on their knees, they looked up into His face and said:

"Truly, Thou art the Son of God," and it was from the depths of their hearts they spoke.

"BREAD FROM HEAVEN."

The day after the feeding of the five thousand our Lord taught in the synagogue of Capharnaum. And there came to Him many of those who had eaten His bread the evening before. They were puzzled about our Lord; they could not understand His ways. He was a mystery to them. With His power and influence they felt He could raise the standard of Israel and lead the people to victory wherever and whenever He would. He was a Ruler of men, they

saw, and He often spoke of His kingdom. And yet He took no step as far as they could see to establish it. He was content to preach and to heal; to toil and slave for the most miserable of mankind, whilst He hid Himself from the notice of the learned and the great. What could His aim be? and what was His object in coming amongst them?

“How hard it is for a rich man to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven,” our Lord once said. These men were not rich, perhaps, in the common sense of the word, but they were rich in the sense our Lord meant. They loved earthly things, and their minds and hearts were occupied with getting and keeping them. They had followed Him this day to see what more He had to give them, whether He was an acquaintance worth cultivating.

Our Lord lets them see how thoroughly He knows them. “Amen, amen, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you have seen miracles, but because you did eat of the loaves and were filled. Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that which endureth unto life everlasting, which the Son of man will give you.”

“What shall we do that we may work the works of God?” they asked.

“This is the work of God, that you believe in Him Whom He hath sent,” was our Lord’s simple answer. *Faith!* that one thing He

asked of all with whom He had anything to do, that one thing which would have brought with it all other good things. These men of Capharnaum had not got it. They had seen Him in their midst for nearly two years, and they had not known Him ; they had not recognised a Divine hand in the miracles they had seen. Now they ask :

“ What sign therefore doth Thou show ? that we may see and may believe Thee ; what dost Thou work ? ” *What sign !* As much as to say : “ The bread you gave us yesterday was all very well in its way, and we are much obliged to you. But you do not intend that for a sign, do you ? Our nation is accustomed to far greater wonders than that. Moses fed our forefathers for forty years on manna, as it is written, ‘ He gave them bread from Heaven to eat. ’ Can you show us anything equal to that ? ”

“ Amen, amen, I say to you, Moses gave you not bread from Heaven, but My Father giveth you the true bread from Heaven. For the bread of God is that which cometh down from Heaven and giveth life to the world. ”

Was it hunger and thirst after justice that made the people cry out so eagerly :

“ Lord, give us always this bread ” ?

Jesus said : “ I am the Bread of life ; he that cometh to Me shall not hunger, and he that believeth in Me shall never thirst. But I say

unto you, that you also have seen Me and you believe not. . . .” The Jews therefore murmured at Him because He had said : “I am the living Bread, which came down from Heaven.” And they said : “Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How then saith He, ‘I came down from Heaven’?”

Do you notice the cowardly habit the Jews had of muttering and murmuring amongst themselves? People mutter when they have not courage enough to speak out, nor self-command enough to be silent. So was it with these Jews. They turned their back upon our Lord and grumbled over His words.

“Murmur not among yourselves,” Jesus said. “No man can come to Me except the Father, Who hath sent Me, draw him, and I will raise him up in the last day. . . . I am the Bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the desert and are dead. This is the Bread which cometh down from Heaven, that if any man eat of it he may not die. I am the living Bread which came down from Heaven. If any man eat of this Bread he shall live for ever ; and the Bread that I will give is My Flesh for the life of the world.”

The Jews took our Lord's words literally—they were to eat His Flesh and drink His Blood, and they showed by every means in

their power how distasteful the idea was to them. They perfectly understood His meaning, His words were too clear to be doubtful, but they mistook the *manner* of His giving. With that they had nothing to do. When the time came He would show them *how*. At present He only asked them to take on faith the mystery He had revealed to them.

"They strove among themselves, saying: '*How* shall this man give us His flesh to eat?' Jesus said to them:

"'Amen, amen, I say unto, except you eat the Flesh of the Son of man and drink His Blood, you shall not have life in you. He that eateth My Flesh and drinketh My Blood hath everlasting life, and I will raise him up in the last day. For My Flesh is meat indeed and My Blood is drink indeed. He that eateth My Flesh and drinketh My Blood abideth in Me and I in him. . . . This is the Bread that came down from Heaven. Not as your fathers did eat manna and are dead. He that eateth this Bread shall live for ever.'"

Our Lord could not be ignorant that the Jews, although mistaken as to the *manner* of His giving (of which He said nothing), yet understood that He was to give them really His flesh to eat and His blood to drink—and over and over again He says they are right in this latter interpretation. What they have

really and truly understood they have only to believe.

Only to believe and they cannot do it! Look at them going away, leaving Him for ever. Listen to them muttering, "This is a hard saying, and who can hear it?" No turning to our Lord and telling Him their trouble, not one prayer for light and grace. If only, like the father of the child possessed, they had cried out, "Lord, I do believe, help Thou my unbelief," Jesus would have poured into their souls such faith that to believe without understanding would have been a joy to them. But they have no humility, and without humility faith is impossible.

"After this many of His disciples went back and walked no more with Him." Think of the pain in our Lord's Heart! Gone from Him, lost to Him, those souls for whom He had prayed and laboured, and for whom He would shed His Blood. And lost because they could not *trust* Him. To eat His Flesh and drink His Blood was a thought from which their minds revolted. And yet He had said so plainly it was *Bread* they should eat, *i.e.*, His very body under the appearance of bread. If only they had waited patiently for His full light or had been content to see a little and believe much, they need not have left Him. The day was not far off when He would make His meaning clear, and

His faithful few would be with Him to see and understand. That day He "*took bread and blessed and broke . . . and said, 'Take ye and eat, this is My Body, which is given for you.'*" Was this a hard saying? The Apostles would not think so, nor the millions of Catholics who since then have been fed and nourished by that most Blessed Bread that came down from Heaven.

"But now Jesus said to the twelve :

" 'Will you also go away?'

" Simon Peter answered :

" 'Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life.' " Thanks be to God, there was one to give comfort to our Lord's Heart in the hour of its bitter sorrow ! Thou hast *the words of eternal life*—not easy words always, but always lifegiving. What an insight into Peter's mind his answer gives us ! Those who had just left our Lord did not relish spiritual things, and they went back to the world with no regret, but the whole bent of Peter's mind was towards a higher good. Outside our Lord he knew it could not be found, then to whom could he go ?

To whom shall *we* go ? Peter answered in the name of the whole college of Apostles. He took it for granted that the twelve thought and believed as he did—but there was a traitor in the camp. Judas had already fallen. He

had given way to his predominant passion—love of money. He had pilfered from the common purse, kept for himself gifts given to all, and hoarded secret gains. Thus disposed, he listened to the dark words of the Pharisees, and his faith in our Lord was shaken, his love grew cold. Now, this day he has chosen the downward path, let go his last spark of faith and extinguished his little remaining charity.

“Have I not chosen you twelve,” our Lord said, “and one of you is a devil?”

Yet our Lord did not expel Judas. He did not drive him away as one unworthy to be near Him. He suffered him to take his choice, to go or to remain. And Judas chose to remain. So our Lord bore with his deceit and his mutterings. He kept him near Him and gave him every chance of repentance, and abundance of help and grace. Still Judas was lost. God, Who made him without his co-operation, would not save him without it. Neither will He save us. It is awful to think that for the salvation of our soul what Jesus Christ our Lord did for us, does not suffice—we are bound to do our part, or like Judas we shall be lost.

Will you also go away? our Lord says to us.

XXIX.

THE KING'S BANQUET.

“He hath given His Bread to the hungry.”—EZECH. xviii.

You remember that our Blessed Lord visited the Phenician coast and healed the daughter of a Syro-Phenician woman. Now trace on your map the journey our Lord made when He quitted those parts. St. Mark tells us He left Tyre, went north to Sidon, an ancient port, and then south to the Lake of Galilee, and on “through the midst of the coasts of Decapolis.”

Decapolis was the name given to ten Greek cities situated, with the exception of Scythopolis, to the east of the Jordan. The most northerly of these towns was Damascus, the most southerly Philadelphia. In between these two cities Jesus journeyed.

It does not take long to run one's finger over this country as marked on the map; but to travel on foot under a July sun, surrounded, pressed upon, crushed by a slow-moving multitude, to be healing, teaching, comforting the whole day must have been wearying and exhausting to our Blessed Lord. But it was not fatigue

that Jesus minded. It was the coldness and hardness of men's hearts that stopped the flow of His graces. More of His own people had turned from Him during the second year of His ministry than during the first, and during the third still more abandoned Him. At this very time He was leaving Judea lest His presence in its midst should make it more guilty, and was directing His steps towards the home of the heathen.

One day He sat on the slope of a hill surrounded by a crowd--four thousand men, most of whom had prayed to the gods of Greece and Syria, but who now stood humble and docile before Him, their Creator. Women and little children too were gathered there, breathlessly eager to catch His every word. He was telling them in simple language of the One true God, Who was their loving Father, "doing good from Heaven, giving rains and fruitful seasons, filling their hearts with good and gladness" (Acts xiv.) He alone was the Supreme Ruler; He alone was worthy of the love of their hearts; He had loved them so much as to send into the world His only-begotten Son.

Slowly, very slowly, the Divine truths sank into their hearts. Many questions they asked and to each received a patient loving answer, till at last they believed in God and in His Messiah.

Three days the multitude had been listening to our Lord, sleeping by Him in the shelter of the rocks, eating such scanty provisions as they had brought with them, but above all watching His every movement and gesture, and listening enraptured to His beautiful voice. Far too much engrossed were they with spiritual things to notice that their food had failed, that they were in a desert place, and that their little ones were weak for want of bread. But our Lord was on the watch. As God feeds the birds of the air, so did He feed those people who had troubled so little about what they should eat or drink.

“Calling His disciples together He saith to them :

“‘I have compassion on the multitude, for behold they have now been with Me three days and have nothing to eat. And if I send them away fasting to their home they will faint, for some of them come from afar off.’

“And His disciples answered Him :

“‘From whence can any one fill them here with bread in the wilderness?’ And He asked them :

“‘How many loaves have you?’ Who said :

“‘Seven!’ And taking the seven loaves, giving thanks He broke, and gave to His disciples to set before them, and they set them before the people. And they had a few little fishes ; and

He blessed them, and commanded them to be set before them. And they did eat and were filled, and they took up that which was left of the fragments, seven baskets. And they that had eaten were about four thousand. And He sent them away."

And the four thousand went away into their own cities, towns, and hamlets, carrying away with them the sweet remembrance of the Heavenly face of their Redeemer and of His generous Heart, which had had compassion on them, a heathen multitude.

THE HEAD OF THE CHURCH.

A few days after this event Jesus was in the neighbourhood of Cesarea Philippi. This town was dedicated to Tiberius, the reigning Emperor of Rome. It was a pagan city where the god Pan and his nymphs and his satyrs were honoured by a temple. There too was an amphitheatre, in which not many years later the Jews, captive and enslaved, were compelled to take a part in the gladiatorial combats, "to make a Roman holiday."

The country round Cesarea was beautiful. Close by was the upper source of the river Jordan, whose gushing fountains, broad streams, and bubbling brooks irrigated the land and made it fertile. Fine groups of fig-trees,

oleanders, and almonds studded the landscape, and the well-watered gardens produced a splendid crop of fruit and vegetables.

Not into the gay city did Jesus enter, nor did He linger on the road frequented by numberless richly-laden caravans of travelling merchants. He sought a place where, quiet with His Apostles, He might pray to His Heavenly Father.

"And it came to pass, as He was alone praying, His disciples also were with Him." When He had finished He turned to them suddenly, and said :

"Whom do the people say that I am?" But they answered :

"Some John the Baptist ; and other some Elias ; and others Jeremias, or one of the prophets."

This was a model answer—true, prudent, charitable. They had heard many cruel blasphemous sayings about their Master, but none of these did they repeat. They only tell the best and kindest—John the Baptist, risen from the dead ; Elias, who raised the dead to life ; Jeremias, who mourned the captivity of his people. "Jesus saith to them :

"'But whom do you say that I am?'" Promptly, steadfastly, inspired by God Himself, Peter answered :

"Thou art Christ, the Son of the living

God!" Solemn as a consecration came our Lord's answer :

"Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-Jona ; because flesh and blood hath not revealed it to thee, but My Father Who is in Heaven. And I say to thee : That thou art Peter ; and upon this rock I will build My Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give to thee the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven. And whatsoever thou shalt bind upon earth it shall be bound also in Heaven ; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth it shall be loosed also in Heaven."

Never before was such power given to man. And only to one was such power ever given, to Christ's Vicar upon earth, to Peter, and through him to each succeeding Vicar till the end of time.

The word Peter means rock. Why did our Lord call him rock ! This is why. Our Lord was a builder and wanted stones. He was going to build His Church, and was looking out for materials. He must have foundations, pillars, and ornaments. Peter was to be the foundation-stone, the rock on which the whole Church was to rest. By using this word *rock* Jesus showed that His chosen foundation-stone was solid, strong, to last for all time, The word *gates* stands for government or ruling power, the custom in the East being to try

cases at the gates of cities. "The gates of hell" therefore means that the rulers of hell, with all their cunning, malice, and strength, shall never overthrow Christ's Church. *Keys* are the symbols of authority. The Jewish scribe received a key when permission was given to him to teach. A fortress that surrenders delivers up the keys to the conqueror. The lady of the house a few centuries back wore at her girdle a bunch of keys, the symbols of her authority. Our Lord delivered over to Peter the keys of Heaven and earth. They were His as the King of kings. "I have the keys of death and of hell" (Apoc. i.), He says. The keys He gave to Peter open Heaven and shut hell. What Peter opens on earth is opened in Heaven. What Peter on earth shuts is shut in Heaven. He and his successors, therefore, in performing their office wield authority derived from Heaven; otherwise opening and shutting cannot be ratified in Heaven according to our Lord's promise. And through this promise of our Lord made at Cesarea Philippi, Peter and his successors are, as far as *ex-cathedrâ* definitions of faith and morals are concerned, made *infallible*.

From the moment our Lord addressed those solemn words to Peter, He seems to have spoken more confidentially to His Apostles,

telling them openly of the sufferings and sorrows in store for Him and for them. He told them "He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the Ancients and Scribes and chief priests, and be put to death, and the third day rise again."

Suffer! Be put to death! We know what Peter did. He took our Lord by the hand and drew Him aside, and said:

"Lord, be it far from Thee, this shall not be unto Thee"; as though he would say, "Suffering and death are not for Thee, and Thou shalt not undergo them." Jesus turned upon him with indignation:

"Go behind Me, Satan (tempter); thou art a scandal unto Me; because thou savourest not the things that are of God, but the things that are of men."

"*The things that are of God*"? What are these things? Evidently shame and dishonour and death. Why should these things be *of God*?

God is a tender Father, Who puts right the mistakes His children make. The greatest mistake they ever made was to sin. And God in His infinite wisdom made it a "happy fault," one that brought as great a good as it had brought evil. Suffering is one of the consequences of sin; it is not therefore one of God's creatures. Not He, but man brought it

into being. But He in His infinite wisdom has made suffering a blessed thing. Can you see any blessedness in pain? Perhaps not, for it is a great mystery and hard to understand. Yet it can be understood. Let us think for a little while of some of its advantages.

Suffering detaches us from this world which is not our lasting city. It brings us near to God. It makes us cry out to Him for help and shows us how little happiness there is in everything outside of God. It refines and ennobles us; it teaches us compassion for the sufferings of others. It attracts others to us. And this, perhaps, is the strangest thing about suffering—its attractiveness. Yet the history of all time shows us that man is attracted by suffering. There are few heroes who have become heroes without it. We honour Abraham, because, notwithstanding the anguish of his soul, he was ready to sacrifice Isaac at the command of God. We honour the mother of the seven children who stood by and encouraged her sons to suffer a cruel, lingering death rather than break the law of God. All nations honour Leonidas, the Spartan, because to defend his country he devoted himself to death. And Blessed Thomas More and all the English martyrs we love to honour because they counted their lives as nothing where their conscience was concerned. Count up the heroes who bear

their title without suffering for it : you will find they are very few.

Suffering gives a value to an action that nothing else can give. What fame Sir Philip Sydney has acquired ! He only gave a cup of cold water, but he gave it at the cost of great suffering. The Catholic women of Yorkshire showed their heroism in harbouring priests, not on account of their hospitality, but because of the danger they ran of imprisonment and death. Suppose two generals wage a successful war and win an honourable peace for their country. One general wins his peace by a stroke of good luck, the other at the cost of a death wound. Which of these men wins the most admiration ?

See how our Blessed Lord considered the heart of man. He saw what is attractive to it. He saw what it values, and at any cost He would buy that attractiveness in order to win our love. So He arranged beforehand that from the first moment of life He would have that magic power. His birthplace was to be a crib. His life was to be embittered by neglect and insult. His reputation injured by calumny, His Body marked with wounds, His Heart broken by treason and ingratitude, His death-bed a cross. And from that Cross He promised to draw all hearts to Himself. See how His promise has been fulfilled. Men are hard of heart and slow to believe in love, but suffering

endured for their sake does move them. They cannot look on another's pain untouched. And the Man-God dying on the Cross has drawn hearts to Himself. Millions have looked up at the crucifix and have been saved; penitent tears have been shed at its foot; the wounded hands and feet and side have drawn contrition from hearts hard as stone; heroic deeds have been performed, sufferings have been patiently, joyfully borne for the love of the Crucified One.

Because sufferings were the price of our love, Jesus chose them, and blessed them, and called them the *things of God*. "Having joy set before Him, He chose the Cross, despising the shame." This was the hard lesson that Peter and the Apostles had to learn that day at Cesarea Philippi. "If any man," Jesus said, "will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me." So far the lives of the Apostles had been without much suffering. They had worked hard and fared frugally, but not harder nor more frugally than as fishermen they would have done. But the time was drawing near when suffering was to be their daily bread, when they were to feel the lash and die martyrs. Yet not before they had been shown the way. They were to take up their cross, but it was *to follow* our Lord.

They were to have a Divine Sufferer before

their eyes, that they might understand that sufferings are the *things of God*, and might find pain and sorrow after His example sweet to bear.

XXX.

THE KING IN HIS GLORY.

“One day with the Lord is as a thousand years.”—

2 PETER iii.

ONE midsummer night, about eight days after Peter's confession of faith, Jesus was on Mount Thabor in prayer. Three of His Apostles, the favoured three—Peter, James, and John—lay asleep at His feet. They slept long and wearily. But it was not to sleep that Jesus had led them up into the high mountain “apart by themselves.” He had one of His loving surprises for them, a vision of glory to strengthen their faith, increase their love, and gladden their hearts. “*Waking, they saw His glory.*”

Jesus “was transfigured before them; and His face did shine as the sun, and His garments became shining and exceeding white as snow, so as no fuller on earth can make white. And behold two men were talking with Him. And they were Moses and Elias, appearing in majesty, and they spoke of His decease that He should accomplish in Jerusalem.”

Entranced with the glorious sight, the three Apostles watched and listened in awestruck silence. But when Moses and Elias were departing from our Lord, Peter, as though to stay them, cried out in ecstasy :

“ Master, it is good for us to be here ; let us make here three tabernacles, one for Thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias.” Peter was overwrought, and found relief in speech, yet so beside himself was he with the sight of His Master’s glory that St. Mark tells us “ he knew not what he said.” “ And as he was yet speaking, behold a bright cloud overshadowed them ; and lo ! a voice out of the cloud, saying : ‘ This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased ; hear ye Him.’ ”

And Jesus came and touched them, and said to them :

“ Arise, and fear not.” And they, lifting up their eyes, saw no one but only Jesus. “ As they came down the mountain, He charged them not to tell any man what they had seen till the Son of man shall be risen again from the dead. And they held their peace, and told no man in those days any of these things which they had seen.”

“ It is good for us to be here.” These were Peter’s words of gratitude and gladness. Our Lord’s surprise had overjoyed him, and he gave

up his whole being to the delight of the vision. We can say those words when we are in church, at Mass, at Holy Communion, at Benediction. Where are we so well as with our Lord? There is no glittering white robe and face shining as the sun, but what matter since we have our Lord Himself? When we feel restless and tired in church or at prayer let us rouse ourselves with the thought that Jesus, all glorious and beautiful, is there, and say with steadfast lively faith, "Lord, it is good for us to be here."

Morning had dawned whilst Jesus was still on Mount Thabor. Down in the plain below the nine Apostles whom He had left behind were in distress. A heart-broken father had brought his son, possessed with a devil, to them in hopes of a cure, but they had not been able to heal him. The Scribes standing by and the unbelievers in the multitude were disputing with them. This seemed a triumph indeed for the enemies of our Lord. These disciples of His, who had been doing wonderful things, were baffled at last. They professed to be able to cast out devils, but here was one that was too much for them. Would their Master be more successful?

Seeing Jesus approach, they ran in a body towards Him and saluted Him. Among the most eager was the father of the unfortunate

boy, who, falling down on his knees, cried out in agonised accents :

“Master, I beseech Thee, look upon my son, because he is my only one ; he is a lunatic, and suffereth much ; for he falleth often into the fire and often into the water, and lo ! a dumb spirit seizeth him, and he suddenly crieth out, and he throweth him down and teareth him, so that he foameth : and bruising him, he hardly departeth from him. And I desired Thy disciples to cast him out, and they could not.”

“Bring him unto Me,” Jesus said to the father. No sooner was the boy brought into the Divine presence than “the spirit troubled him, and being thrown down upon the ground, he rolled about foaming.”

“How long time is it since this has happened unto him ?” Jesus asked.

“From his infancy,” was the sad answer. “And oftentimes he casts him into the fire and into waters to destroy him ; but if Thou canst do anything, help us, having compassion on us.”

“If thou canst believe,” said our Blessed Lord, “all things are possible to him that believeth.” And immediately the father of the boy, crying out with tears, said :

“I do believe, Lord ; help my unbelief.”

“Deaf and dumb spirit,” Jesus said, threatening the unclean spirit, “I command thee, go out of him, and enter not any more into him.”

“ And crying out and greatly tearing him, he went out of him, and he became as dead, so that many said, ‘ He is dead.’ But Jesus, taking him by the hand, lifted him up, and restored him to his father ; and the child was cured from that hour.”

Do you think our Lord’s eyes were dry when He saw the tears running down that poor father’s face ? Or that He listened to the out-pouring of his grief without showing compassion ? No. Never could the poor man have told such a tale of sorrow unless he had seen loving compassion in the face of his listener. The Heart of our Lord was more tender than the heart of the father. He loved the boy more than ^{his} own parent loved him, and He cured him for the father’s sake indeed, but far more to stop the aching sorrow of His own Divine Heart at the sight of a child of God so terribly afflicted.

The Apostles, humbled and astonished at their failure, followed our Lord and asked Him *secretly* why they could not cast that devil out. One reason our Lord gave : “ Because of your unbelief.” And He added solemnly : “ Amen, I say to you, if you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, you shall say to this mountain : ‘ Remove from hence hither,’ and it shall remove, and nothing shall be impossible to you.”

Let us say with the father of the possessed boy : " I do believe, Lord ; help Thou my unbelief." For we have many mountains that want taking down—pride is a mountain, and a mountain of precipitation like the one near Nazareth, for pride leads to many a fall.

XXXI.

A ROYAL LESSON.

“ Lord, teach us to pray.”—LUKE xi.

“ LORD, teach us to pray !” It was the Apostles who spoke. They were standing upon Mount Olivet, watching our Lord at prayer, and the sight of Him praying had created in them a longing to pray as He prayed. “ *Teach us.*” How glad our Lord was to teach ; gladdest of all to teach how to pray ! For prayer is necessary for us—as necessary to our souls as food is to the body. Without it, in the ordinary way, men cannot save their souls. No wonder, then, Jesus laid so much stress upon prayer, and urged the Jews over and over again to pray. “ Ask, and it shall be given to you,” He said. “ Seek, and you shall find ; knock, and it shall be opened to you. For every one that asketh receiveth, and he that seeketh findeth, and to him that knocks it shall be opened ” (Matt. vii.) And again He says, “ Watch ye, therefore, praying at all times.”

It is sad to think that prayer is hard to man. It used not to be. But sin and its consequences weigh down our souls, and we cannot easily or

for long lift up our hearts to God. Jesus had come from Heaven, whither all prayer ascends, and He had been living upon earth, and had read men's hearts and seen how hard they found it to pray. He had heard the laboured prayer of the heathen, who thought that "in their much speaking" their petitions would be granted. He had listened to the Pharisee speaking loud and long in the public places, and He tells us we must not pray like this. "Speak not much," He says to us, "for your Father knoweth what is needful for you before you ask Him." "When thou shalt pray, enter into thy chamber, and having shut the door, pray to thy Father in secret; and thy Father, Who seeth in secret, will repay thee."

Prayer ought to be a simple thing. Talking to God, telling Him our wants as we would tell them to an earthly father or friend, ought not to be hard. The simple-hearted folk who came to Jesus on earth with their troubles and told Him what they wanted, prayed and obtained. "What wilt thou that I do for thee?" Jesus asked a blind man. "Lord, that I may see," was the answer, and he saw. "Jesus, Master, have mercy on us," was the short prayer of the ten lepers, and Jesus cured them. "Lord, save me, I perish," poor sinking Peter cried, and Jesus saved him. "Lord, remember me when Thou shalt come into Thy Kingdom," was the

prayer of the penitent thief, and that day he was in Paradise with the King. These men asked in a few simple words, but with strong desire and unbounded confidence. How short was Mary's answer to the Archangel Gabriel: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done unto me according to Thy word." Yet this was a perfect prayer. And Jesus God though He was, repeated over and over again one short prayer in His agony in the Garden: "Father, if Thou wilt, remove this chalice from Me. But yet, not My will, but Thine be done." The "Our Father," the only prayer our Lord taught His disciples, though so full of meaning, is short and simple. "Thus, therefore, shall you pray," He said:

"Our Father, Who art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation. But deliver us from evil. Amen."

It is not difficult, surely, to pray like this. Yet this is all God requires of us. An old labourer spent hours in the church, and when asked what he said all the time, answered, "I say the 'Our Father.'" Who could have done better than that?

Prayer to be heard must have certain qualities, our Lord tells us. It must be *humble, persevering, trustful*.

It must be *humble*. That, surely, is not asking much. No one gives an alms to a proud or an insolent beggar. We are all beggars before God, and beggars who have no claim upon Him except through His infinite mercy. Now, if we come before Him with pride in our hearts He cannot show us mercy; He has to send us empty away.

"Two men," Jesus tells us, "went up into the Temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee standing prayed thus with himself: 'O God, I give Thee thanks that I am not as the rest of men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, as also is this publican. I fast twice in a week; I give tithes of all I possess.' And the publican, standing afar off, would not so much as lift up his eyes towards Heaven, but struck his breast saying: 'O God, be merciful to me, a sinner.' I say to you, this man went down into his house justified rather than the other; because every one that exalteth himself shall be humbled; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted" (Luke xviii.)

What a picture these two men make! The Pharisee in his rich garments, with his head erect, his eyes lifted heavenward, praising—not

God, but himself. And the humble publican near the door, with his eyes bent on the earth, breathing out that short prayer for mercy.

Prayer must be *persevering*. We must ask for what we want not once only, nor twice. We must continue praying until we gain our petition, or something better. Our Lord bids us go on praying so long as *to weary* our Heavenly Father into giving us what we want. He tells us by a striking parable what He means :

“There was a judge in a certain city who feared not God, nor regarded man. And there was a certain widow in that city, and she came to him saying, ‘Avenge me of my adversary.’ And he would not for a long time. But afterwards he said within himself, ‘Although I fear not God, nor regard man, yet because this widow is troublesome to me I will avenge her, lest continually coming, she weary me.’ Hear what the unjust judge saith! And will not God revenge His elect who cry to him day and night?”

“*Who cry to Him day and night.*” Do not these words show how persevering our prayer is to be? Does it not seem as if we were to become even troublesome in our praying? Yet it is only seeming. We know God stoops to listen so readily and gives so freely. If He withholds His gifts for a time, it is only because He loves to hear us ask, and because, by keeping

us waiting, He can make our dispositions better and give us later better gifts.

Prayer must be *trustful*. We must pray with confidence and faith in God's power and willingness to give. We pay no compliment to our friend when we doubt his will to help us. Our love is little where our trust is weak. "*If thou canst believe*," Jesus said to the father of the possessed boy. "*Believe only*," He said to Jairus. "*O thou of little faith*," He said to Peter. "*Because of your unbelief*," He answered the disappointed Apostles who had failed to cast out the demon. "Amen I say to you, that whosoever shall say to this mountain, 'Be thou moved and cast into the sea, and *shall not stagger in his heart, but believe . . . it shall be done unto him*.'" And when the Apostles one day humbly said, "Lord, increase our faith," Jesus answered, "If you have faith like to a grain of mustard seed, you might say to this mulberry tree, 'Be thou rooted up, and be thou transplanted into the sea,' and it would obey you." (Luke xvii.)

Some of us might say, "Since God knows all we want, and our Lord says He does, why have we to ask Him?" We have to ask Him, because He tells us to ask Him, and He tells us to ask because He wants us to come to Him. Supposing He had said: "Remember

that I know exactly what you want. You have no occasion to come telling Me all your little needs and desires. I know them. If I think good I will give them to you; if I do not think good, all the asking in the world will be of no use." Suppose our Lord had said this, how crushed we should have felt! What a void there would have been in our hearts! But He did not say this. Quite the contrary. There is nothing He insists upon so much as that we should pray. Kings make a favour of granting an audience. Our King speaks as if the favour were on God's side. "Your Heavenly Father will repay you," He says. Repay us for what? For coming to talk to Him, for telling Him our troubles, for asking gifts of Him? He stretched out His hands one day towards the people of Nain and said, "Come to Me, all you that labour, and are burdened, and I will refresh you. . . . And you shall find rest for your souls." And if we do not come to Him, He misses us and is pained. "You will not come to Me that you may have life, and have it more abundantly."

Was there ever a king in history or in legend who loved his people as our King loves us! And shall we not love Him in return? Shall we not go to Him and trust Him?

If we come not to Thee, to whom, Lord, shall we go?

XXXII.

LOVED OF THE KING.

“Arise, thou that sleepest, arise from the dead.”—EPH. v.

How fond of water our Lord seems to have been! We find Him teaching in a boat on the Lake of Galilee or sitting by its shore; when He rested in Samaria it was by Jacob's Well, and here in Perea He has chosen a spot on the banks of the Jordan, where not a sound is heard but the swift flow of the river or the plunge of a water-fowl. Judea, the home of the Pharisees, is on the other side, and so for a little while Jesus is left in peace.

Presently there comes the sound of footsteps on the shingle. It is a messenger from Bethany, anxious and out of breath. The Apostles make way for him to come to the Master. He says abruptly:

“*He, whom Thou loveth, is sick.*” Only that—but all who are standing there knew that Lazarus is meant. What will Jesus do? Will He risk His life and go back to Judea, where but now the Jews sought to kill Him? or will He heal His friend at a distance as He

healed the centurion's servant? "*Jesus loved Martha and her sister Mary and Lazarus.*" As God made man He loved all men, the whole human race. But His sacred human Heart had its special friendships, and among these was that blessed family.

You would never guess what our Lord does. He stays away from Bethany for four whole days. Less still would you guess why He stays away—*because He loved them.* He tells His disciples so Himself. If He went he could not help healing Lazarus ; He could not see the tears of Mary and Martha and not wipe them away. Yet He wants Lazarus to die, to be buried even, that He may raise him to life again. For this miracle is to bring glory to God by increasing faith in many hearts at a time when faith will be wanted more than ever before. And these dear friends of our Lord, who are to have the merit through all eternity of giving Him this glory, have to pay for it by days of suspense and by the loss of one dear to them ; but it is worth that, and more.

There are watchers at Bethany's house of mourning. Day by day, hour by hour, they wait for the Master's coming. At last, far in the distance, a crowd is seen advancing. He is there and Martha hastens to meet Him :

"Lord, if Thou hadst been here, my brother

had not died. But now also I know that whatsoever Thou wilt ask of God, God will give it Thee." She looked up at Him. She knew Him so well. She had trusted Him these four days. He had not come to them in their trouble, He had not soothed the last moments of His dying friend, He had not even sent him a message. But she knew He loved them and had done all for the best. This was true faith—but yet a higher faith was required of Martha.

"I am the resurrection and the life," our Lord answered; *"he that believeth in Me, although he be dead, shall live; and everyone that liveth and believeth in Me shall not die for ever. Believest thou this?"*

"Yea, Lord, I have believed that Thou art Christ, the Son of the living God, Who art come into this world."

Then our Lord asked for Mary, and Martha, going quickly, secretly calls her sister, and tells her the good news:

"The Master is come, and calleth for thee!"

It takes Mary a very little time to come up to where the Master is standing, and throwing herself on her knees at His feet, she repeats her sister's words. Over and over again during those sad days they had said to each other, "If the Master were only with us! If Jesus would only come!"

"Lord, if Thou hadst been here my brother had not died." She stops; the tears fall so fast, she cannot speak. Our Blessed Lord is troubled.

"Where have you laid him?" He asks.

"Lord, come and see," and Mary leads the way. St. John was present and he tells us that *"Jesus wept."* Do you know what sympathy is? It is the taking up of another's sorrow or joy and making it your own. This is what Jesus did then. He felt so much for those poor sorrowing hearts, that their sorrow was His too, and it forced tears from His sacred eyes. We shall know where to go when we want pity.

A crowd had gathered round the cave where Lazarus was buried. His family was one of distinction, well known in Jerusalem, so that during the last few days there had been a constant stream of people coming and going. They make room for our Lord to approach. Seeing the tears in His eyes, some say :

"See how much He loved him." Others are puzzled. *"Why did He not prevent his death,"* they answer. *"Surely one who could cure the man born blind, could have healed His own friend!"*

It is a solemn moment, and the hearts of the Apostles beat high with expectation. Is the Master going to distinguish Himself? Is He going to perform one of His stupendous

miracles? How vehemently they hope He may!

"Take away the stone," Jesus says. A deep flush of shame spreads over Martha's face, a feeling of horror seizes her; it must not be, for Lazarus has been lying in the tomb for four days. She turns to our Lord and tells Him so. What a loving look Jesus casts upon her!

"Did not I say to thee, that if thou believe, thou shalt see the glory of God?" Martha says no more. The stone is rolled back and the ghastly figure of the embalmed man is seen by all. The people stand awe-stricken; they shudder. Think of that open grave and the propped-up corpse erect in front!

With eyes lifted up to Heaven Jesus prayed to His Heavenly Father. Then with a loud voice He cries:

"Lazarus, come forth."

Swathed, bound hand and foot, Lazarus slowly, step by step, comes forward. There is not a sound, not a movement in the crowd. The people scarcely breathe.

"Loose him and let him go," says our Blessed Lord. The napkin is taken from the head, the white robes are loosened, the feet are unbound, Lazarus is a living man. All have seen the miracle—the crowd from Jerusalem, the little company from Perea, the band of Apostles. Not Peter only and James and John this time,

but all the Twelve have seen with their own eyes the dead Lazarus live again. Philip and Andrew were there, and Bartholomew, Jude and Simon, Matthew and James—and Judas. Is there one among them now whose faith is wanting? Is there one now who will say that Jesus is not the Messiah? St. John tells us that many believed in Jesus; but there were many others, stiff-necked and stubborn-hearted, who would not believe in Him. Let us see what they did.

Away in Jerusalem sits the council of Ancients and chief priests, Scribes and Pharisees. Look around at these faces hideous with a passion that makes them like the devils themselves. They hate. They have given way to their pride, their anger, and their jealousy, until it has turned love out of their hearts and planted hatred there instead. They are eaten up with hatred, and mad to satisfy it cost what it may. They cannot rest at night, nor in the day. They engage spies, set watches, hold councils, and will stop at nothing to be revenged.

But whom do they hate? Who has injured them, wronged them so shamefully that they cannot forgive? They hate our Lord; they hate Him Who has come to die for them, their Messiah, God made man. He has not wronged them, but He has done what they have left undone—He has instructed the poor The

multitude worship Him; they hang on His words and sing His praises everywhere. And the Ancients and Scribes and Pharisees have lost much of their reputation; they are not sought after and courted as they used to be. Besides, they have been reprovèd by Jesus, and that before all the people. But, above all, He has worked miracles. Only just this moment some of their spies have come from Bethany to say that Lazarus, whom all Jerusalem knew to be dead, has been raised to life. Four days in the tomb and now he moves about a living man!

"What do we," says one of the councillors angrily, *"for this man doth many miracles? If we let him alone so, all will believe in Him, and the Romans will come, and take away our place and nation."*

Caiaphas, the high priest, from his lofty seat looks down contemptuously.

"You know nothing," he says; *"it is expedient that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not."* He spoke the deepest truth man ever uttered. It was expedient, necessary that that one man should die to save His people. But woe to those who should cause His death. Woe to Caiaphas, woe to the Ancients and Scribes and Pharisees who sat in the council that day.

The meeting breaks up. Watch the members gathering their rich robes round them and going

out of the curtained doorway in order of rank. The mark of Cain is upon their souls. They have consented to a murder. Jesus of Nazareth must die, they have said—and He is God.

That day, by order of the Sanhedrin, a proclamation was read in the Holy City: that "*if any one knew where Jesus was, he should tell, that they might apprehend Him.*"

On a heap of stones by the wayside near Jericho, some few weeks after the raising of Lazarus, sat a blind beggar listening intently. For there was a distant sound as of tramping feet on the rough road, and a noise as of a multitude coming. "Jesus of Nazareth is passing," some one tells him. Instantly the man rises to his feet and with a loud voice calls out, "*O Lord! Thou Son of David, have mercy on me!*" Jesus is not yet within hearing, but the crowd going before bid him be quiet. "The Master is speaking," they say, and such cries are out of place. Unheeding the remonstrance the poor man shouts again, "*Jesus, Son of David! have mercy on me!*" Jesus hears, and, standing still, calls the blind man to Him.

"*What wilt thou that I do for thee?*"

"*Lord, that I may see!*" Jesus, filled with compassion for him, touched his eyes. And looking up, Bartimaeus saw. O children, what

did he see? What was the first sight that poor blind beggar took into his soul? The face of Jesus, that face which one day, please God, we shall see in all its glory. But Bartimaeus saw it pale and very weary; drops of perspiration stood on the forehead, and there was an expression of deep sadness on the sacred features. That He should be tired was not wonderful. Feel the heat of the day! Look at the crowd of uncouth peasants who surround Him, at the little children running restlessly in and out! No wonder He was tired; but why was He sad?

If we had asked the Apostles why, they would have told us that really they did not know. They had heard Him say twice, nay, three times, that dreadful things were about to happen to Him in Jerusalem; that He was to be mocked and scourged and spit upon—put to death even, and then rise again. But, of course, these things were said in allegory, by way of parable. He was the Messiah—of that they were sure. He must therefore establish a kingdom. There would be obstacles in the way, no doubt, but He would overcome them as He had overcome so many others. Why He was so sad they could not tell. He had enemies, but just see how the people loved Him.

Poor Apostles! Three times, indeed, the

Master had told them of His coming shame and death, for He could not bear to take them unawares. But they did not understand ; they would not understand. Jesus deals so reverently with souls ; He will not constrain them. They must yield their will, they must work with Him, and then He will do the rest. But the Apostles are not in the best of dispositions. They love their Master, but they want Him to do their will ; they do not want to find out His. They have made up their minds that He will found on earth a new kingdom, in which they will be the princes of the realm.

And Jesus is going to disappoint them. They are looking forward to glory and honour—He to shame and insult. In a few days He will die upon the Cross, and they will be left scattered like sheep, scandalised, shaken in faith. So Jesus is sad, and in His sadness He finds little comfort from the Twelve. His Sacred Heart is breaking, and they have no words of pity. They could have cheered those last few days for Him, and soothed His last hours. If they had done their part there would have been no need of angels to minister to Him in the Garden.

Jesus is only fifteen miles from Jerusalem now. He leads the way up the rugged hill-path which takes you straight to the Holy City. The Apostles can scarcely keep pace with Him,

He is so eager to suffer. Yet He stays awhile at Bethany, for Simon, once a leper, expects Him, and he must not be disappointed. He has spread a banquet to honour our Lord, and has invited Lazarus to meet Him. All the Apostles will be there, as also a vast crowd, which has come over from Jerusalem to see the man raised from the dead, and the great Wonder-worker whose voice brought him out of the tomb.

The guests are seated, and Martha—busy, active Martha—is serving; but where is Mary? Is it possible she is absent when our Lord is there? No, see, she is coming into the room carrying an alabaster vase of exquisite beauty, which, tightly fastened though it is, yet gives out a fragrant odour. She walks straight to the place where Jesus is sitting, the guests following her with their eyes, wondering. Breaking the slender neck of the vessel, she pours the ointment on to His sacred head, and instantly the room, the passages, the whole house is filled with the precious perfume. Spikenard it is, of the rarest quality, brought from far away lands. A whole pound weight Mary has bought, for nothing can be too good for Him, Who is God. Bending reverently over the sacred feet she pours the ointment over them, and with her hair wipes off the trickling drops. Jesus does not speak. Once

before when she had knelt at His side He had said : "*Thy sins are forgiven thee.*" No need for those words now, and He is silent.

Down towards the lower end of the table whispers are heard. One who holds a purse tightly clasped in his right hand says, scowling at the holy woman :

"To what purpose is this waste ? For this might have been sold for much and given to the poor." Poor ! little did Judas care for the poor. The gains of a thief do not go to fill a poor-box.

Our Lord overhears the remark. He cannot bear any one to be unjustly accused, and now He takes Magdalen's part.

"Let her alone," He says. *"She has wrought a good work upon Me. For the poor you have always with you ; but Me you have not always. She is come beforehand to anoint My Body for the burial."* Did Magdalen understand our Lord's words ? Did she know that the sacred body of our Lord will be dead before the fragrance of her spikenard has left it ? A penitent like Mary gets very near to the Sacred Heart. Perhaps He told her the secret of His Passion.

Watch Judas, "*the thief*," as St. John calls him. He is moving uneasily on his couch, muttering some excuse about urgent business which requires his presence elsewhere. See

him slink out of the door without a word of farewell. How degrading sin is! It lowers even the exterior of a man; look at the bent head, the slouching gait, the twitching fingers. He is off to the chief priests—all alone; to make his bargain alone, alone to receive the price of his sin. Judas has determined to betray his Master—for money, for what he can get, so he must be alone.

It is the first day of the week, Palm Sunday we call it, and Jerusalem is thronged with people. The Passover being near, 2,000,000 or more have come to adore in the Temple. But why are they so excited? Why is *the whole city moved*? What are those shouts in the distance? Let us follow the rushing crowd through the Southern Gate; soon we shall catch the words. Hark! "Hosanna to the Son of David. Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord, the King of Israel" (John xii.) Look, the procession is in sight now. Multitudes are coming this way *waving palms with joy, praising God with a loud voice for all the mighty works they had seen*. Little children are brandishing their green branches and singing their loudest; men from Galilee throw down their bright-coloured cloaks to make a carpeted way; young girls strew the road with sweet scented blossoms, jessamine

and rose and myrtle. Jews from the city mingle with Jews from the provinces, and all unite to sing the praise of the Messiah: "*Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord, the King of Israel.*"

Over the brook Kedron come the words ; the priests in the Temple courts hear them and gnash their teeth with rage. "We will destroy this King of Israel," they say ; "He shall not reign over us." And yet see what a King He is. So powerful that the dead rise at His bidding, so terrible in His just anger that the Pharisees themselves shrink before Him, and dare not lay hands upon Him. Yet so meek that the little children hold on to the skirts of His robe and lie happy in His arms. He is meekest of all to-day, the day of His triumph. The prophet Isaias wrote of the Messiah : "*Fear not, daughter of Sion, behold thy King cometh to thee meek and sitting upon an ass.*" This King is meek and loving ; the tears He shed over Jerusalem are hardly dry upon His cheeks. He is sitting in humble state on an ass, that none of His poor ones may be turned away by the majesty of His coming. Who would not love such a King ?

But the Scribes, and Ancients, and chief priests, the Pharisees and Sadducees, will have none of Him. See them going down Mount Moriah, mingling with the crowd, and trying to

check the enthusiasm of the people. But no one heeds them to-day. In desperation they turn to our Lord Himself.

"*Master,*" they say peremptorily, "*rebuke Thy disciples.*" But Jesus will not rebuke them. Their hosannas give glory to God, and if they were silent the very stones would cry out, He says.

Joyous and glad the procession moves on towards the Holy City. Up the steep street it winds, until before the Temple porticoes it halts, and the King of Sion passes into the House of God, and begins His daily work of teaching and healing and consoling, as if no one had called Him King, no one had sung "Hosanna." He is about to leave the world, and like a father going from home He seems not to know how to do enough for those He is leaving behind. And they, the Apostles, the disciples, and the multitude that loves Him, flock to the Temple *early in the morning to hear Him* (Luke xxi.) They brought their sick to Him and He laid His hands upon them. They gathered round Him for His last advice. And He answered their questions, warned them of coming evils, and told them stories full of spiritual meaning.

XXXIII.

THE SECOND COMING.

“Blessed is he that watcheth.”—APOC. xvi.

WHEN the western sky was red with the rays of the setting sun Jesus left the Temple.

“*Master,*” said one of His disciples, “*behold, what manner of stones, and what buildings are here.*” Our Lord looked round upon the sparkling marble, the plates of gold, the mosaics, and precious metals. But He only sighed.

“*Seest thou all these buildings?*” He said. “*There shall not be left a stone upon a stone.*” They passed on until they reached Mount Olivet, and there our Lord sat down and faced Jerusalem. Peter, James, and John, and Andrew gathered round Him with anxious faces, begging to be told what He meant by those sad words: “There shall not be left a stone upon a stone.”

A solemn, terrible, twofold prophecy was our Lord's answer. They had spoken proudly of the beauty of their Temple, of its great strength and its wonderful stones; but it was doomed

to be destroyed, and the whole land to be made desolate. Wars and rumours of wars there would be, He said, persecutions and betrayals, pestilence, and famine, and earthquakes. Then a great army would surround Jerusalem, bringing desolation upon the land and distress upon the people. The sword would slay them by thousands, and by thousands they would be led captive into all nations; and Jerusalem, their beautiful city, "the pride of all the earth," would be trampled upon by the Gentiles to the end of time.

"When these things come to pass," Jesus added, "go out of the city, out of the land of Judea, and flee into the mountains, for scarcely any one will be saved in that day of tribulation."

In little more than thirty years this prophecy was fulfilled, word for word. The Holy City, besieged by a Roman army, was trampled under foot, its walls were demolished, and its Temple burnt to the ground. Ten hundred thousand men perished by the sword, and the rest, a famine-stricken multitude, captives of war, were scattered abroad into distant lands.

Terrible as was the destruction of Jerusalem it was only a type, a foreshadowing of a far more terrible destruction yet to come, of which

the prophets of old had written and which our Lord now foretells to His Apostles. With hearts sinking within them they drew closer to Him and listened.

He told them of a day that the Holy Spirit calls *a cruel day, full of indignation and wrath and fury to lay the land desolate*. He told them how suddenly that day would come, sudden as a flash of lightning. The nations of the earth will be eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, laughing and making merry. They will be building beautiful houses, sending out to sea majestic ships full of treasure, proclaiming war on each other, or settling terms of peace. They will be sinning daily and not repenting; saying in their hearts, "there is no God"; blaspheming His holy name, mocking at sacred things, turning the gifts of God against Him, wasting their lives on empty trifles.

Then—the word of destruction will go forth. *The sun shall be darkened in his rising and the moon shall not shine with her light. The stars shall fall from Heaven and the powers of Heaven shall be moved*. Withering away with fear, *every heart of man shall melt and shall be broken* (Is. xiii.) The children of men will grope about in utter darkness, and feel the earth trembling and burning under their feet. They will see fire issue from the hidden parts of the earth, *and devour the beautiful places of*

the wilderness, and the flame burst forth and burn all the trees of the country. And they themselves will feel the horrible heat; their countenances will be as faces burnt. And the tribes of the earth shall mourn as they see the Son of man coming in the clouds of Heaven with much power and majesty, and every eye shall see Him. Oh, saddest of all sad things, that the coming of Jesus Christ, the Prince of the Kings of the earth, Who hath loved us and washed us from our sins in His own Blood, should make the nations of the earth mourn and bewail themselves because of Him (Apoc. i.) Sin it is, and only sin, that makes that everlasting mourning. Too late then to mourn, too late to repent. The Lord hath uttered His voice before the face of His army; for His armies are exceedingly great, they are strong and execute His word. An angel of the Lord shall sound the trumpet through all the earth, and His elect will be gathered together from the four winds, from the farthest parts of the heavens to the utmost bounds of them. And the Son of man will sit upon the great white throne of His majesty, surrounded by all His angels, to judge the human race. On His right hand, in fine linen glittering and white, as a bride adorned, will stand the Blessed; on His left, loathsome and horrible, eaten up with corruption, condemned already by their own bodies,

the accomplices of their sin, the Wicked. *The kings of the earth, and the princes, and tribunes, and the rich and the strong, and every bond-man, and every freeman shall say to the mountains and the rocks: Fall upon us, and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth upon the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb (Apoc. vi.) But too late then to cry for help; too late then to hide in the clefts of the rocks. The heavens are departed as a book folded up; and every mountain, and the islands are moved out of their places.*

Then He that sits on the throne of majesty will turn to the thousands and thousands that stand at His right hand, and say: "Come! Come, ye blessed of My Father, possess you the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

To the wicked His word will be: "Depart! Depart from Me, you cursed, into everlasting fire, which was prepared for the devil and his angels."

Awful, awful prophecy! And He Who uttered it is God, "Who cannot deceive nor be deceived," Who Himself created the everlasting fire for the wicked angels, and Himself pronounces the curse upon all who become like to them. He knew the horrors of the *bottomless pit*, and, anxious as a mother to save her

children, He warns His dear ones how to escape an eternal doom. His word of warning is: *Watch!* One little word only, but deep and full of meaning. To watch means to be wakeful, quick to see, quick to act; it means keeping one object in sight, centring all interest in that one, having eyes and ears and heart for that alone. The soldier standing sentry, the sailor on the look-out at night, the nurse bending over the sick child's bed—all have a watch to keep, with everything depending on their keeping it well. But we are not sentinels, nor sailors pacing the deck at night, nor sick nurses. What is the watch our Lord would have us keep? We must know what He means or we shall not be able to escape our doom.

Like us, the Apostles were eager to know His meaning, and our Lord was eager to tell them.

"Watch, for you know not the day nor the hour," He says, and to make His meaning clear He tells them a story.

It was night-time, and ten virgins, all in white, went out to meet the bridegroom and the bride. In their hands were ten gleaming lamps. Five of the virgins were foolish and brought no oil, five only were wise, with oil in their vessels. Long was the bridegroom coming and the little company slumbered and slept. The hours wore

on and still the lighted lamps flickered in the night air. Midnight dark and cold came, and the cry was heard, "*Behold the Bridegroom cometh, go ye forth to meet Him.*" The five wise virgins awoke and trimmed their lamps in haste, and holding them on high, watched for the bridegroom's coming. But the foolish, roused out of a heavy sleep, found their lamps were gone out and they had no oil.

"*Give us of your oil,*" they said to their companions, "*for our lamps are gone out.*"

"*Lest perhaps there be not enough for us and for you, go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves,*" the prudent virgins answered.

Hurriedly the foolish turned back into the town to buy their oil. They would give a large price for it now, they would make great haste back, the Lord would surely wait. But whilst they were absent the bridegroom came and led the way to the marriage feast. All were within and the doors were shut.

At last came the foolish five, and knocking at the closed door said, with beating hearts,

"Lord, Lord, open to us!" But He from within answered sternly, "*Amen I say to you, I know you not!*"

Not one look at the Bridegroom's face! Banished for ever, out of knowledge, beyond love, they turned away into the outer darkness.

Shut out from the Bridegroom's presence for

such a little thing—only a lighted lamp, only the want of oil!

A little thing? Not if it pleased the Bridegroom to want it; and if little, how shameful to refuse it to Him. But it was not for want of oil, nor for the want of a light, that the virgins were condemned; it was because of the faithless watch they kept. Had those foolish ones watched they would have seen that the flickering lamps could not hold out; they would have known they had no oil and that the wise could not wisely give of theirs. But thoughtless and silly, they laid themselves down to rest securely and awoke with untrimmed lamps and empty vessels. And the door was shut—their chance was gone.

Watch ye, therefore, for you know not the day nor the hour of that last dreadful day. And to us He says, *Watch*—wakeful to know God's Will, eager to do it.

The night is falling fast. Jerusalem in the distance grows less distinct. Is not our Lord going to seek shelter for the night? *The Son of man has not where to lay His head.* About two million people throng Jerusalem, and room is found for them; but our Saviour has no invitation to share a roof in the Holy City. *I looked on the right hand and beheld, and there was no one that would know Me. There is no one that*

hath regard to My soul (Ps. cxii.) He makes no complaint, but wearily each night has conducted His Apostles to Mount Olivet or Bethany, and there, as outcasts of the people, they sleep in the open air. *In the daytime He was teaching in the Temple, and at night, going out, abode in the mount that is called Olivet.*

XXXIV.

THE ROYAL GIFT.

“He gave them Bread from Heaven.

“WHERE wilt Thou that we prepare for Thee to eat the Pasch?” the disciples ask our Lord. A traitor, “one of the twelve,” is standing by to note the “where.” It is very important that he should know all our Lord’s movements, for he has sold his information to the chief priests, and must be able to put them on the right track at any moment. But our Lord’s answer baffles him.

“Go ye into the city to a certain man and say to him, ‘The Master saith, “My time is near at hand; with thee I make the Pasch with My disciples”’” (Matt. xxvi.) Nothing is to be got out of that, so the traitor falls back amongst the others and waits for a more favourable opportunity.

Peter and John are the two entrusted by our Lord with the care of the supper, and right glad and proud they are of the trust. It is not usually their office, for Judas sees to these things; nor do they know why they have been chosen to-day, but they are delighted to be of

use. From Judas they get the money, and he pays it out in a slow, sullen manner, telling Peter to be careful how he spends it, and to be sure to bring back the change.

Down the steep streets the two go. They are devoted friends, though unlike in age, in character, in everything except their love and admiration for our Lord; in that they are as united as brothers. They have the unleavened bread to buy, the wild lettuce, and the wine. Then they choose the lamb, one without blemish. John takes it up gently and carries it like a shepherd in his arms to the Temple, where Peter has to kill it for the sacrifice. Later he writes of the Precious Blood of his Master as that of a "Lamb unspotted and undefiled" (1 Peter i.)

Back they go to the upper chamber to make their preparations. The Master's couch is chosen and drawn up to the board. John is to share it with Him, and Peter bargains to be near. Then the goblets are placed on the table, the portions of unleavened bread and the wine. On the floor by the wall are the water-pots, full to the brim for the hand washings. And when all is done, the room in order, the supper ready, they stand with bright, happy faces on the threshold to welcome their Master, to give Him the kiss of peace. There He comes! How well they know that tall

majestic figure. But how radiant His face is to-day. It has an expression that neither Peter nor John ever remembers to have seen before. There is joy in the look and great love, yet somehow there is sorrow too.

Jesus has longed for this Thursday night, and He takes His place at table in the midst of the Twelve, saying: "With desire, I have desired to eat this Pasch with you before I suffer." The Apostles are so pleased. We do like to be loved, and made much of, and sought after; and here was their Lord and Master actually longing for their company and rejoicing in it.

But His words had a deeper meaning than even His Apostles suspected. He had a gift to give, and the joy in His Heart was caused by the joy of giving it. We love giving, we prove our love by gifts. So does Jesus. But His love is infinite, therefore His gift must be infinite if it is to prove His love. Now God alone is infinite, therefore the gift must be Himself, must be God. And so it is. It is God Himself. See, again, why. His Apostles and every one of us are dear to Him as His life, and dearer. He can part from His life for love of us, but He cannot part from us. To-morrow He dies, and still His love is not satisfied. He must live again for us, with us, in us, because His delight is to be with the children of

men (Prov. viii.) O lover of souls, infinite in love, infinite in power! Your love is a mystery deeper than Your power, and its works are very great. Open our minds that we may understand it, enlarge our hearts that we may love it!

As Jesus looks round on those faithful "friends" who have remained with Him in all the troubles of His public life, He reads their hearts. They are honest, upright hearts, without guile or malice—all except one. And He longs to be united more closely to them. Yet He seems to hesitate. He misses in the Twelve a virtue which of all others is dearest to Him. It is not a great favourite with us, perhaps, but to our Lord it is very dear. *Humility*. They are not humble, or rather they are not humble enough. When we like anything very much, we want to have a great deal of it. Jesus likes humility very much, and wants to find a great deal of it in our hearts—we can never have too much for Him. Let us remember this when we come to Holy Communion.

But the Apostles had little love for humility. They liked outward show and honour; they liked working miracles and casting out devils, and preaching to an admiring crowd. They turned against the mere thought of suffering and shame. Our Lord had tried His best for three years past to humble them, to keep them

their places. It was no use. They were up again in no time. This very night they had been disputing with one another, and aiming each at the first place. All along they have wanted posts of honour in our Lord's kingdom. Two of them bargained for the places at the right and left hand—the highest offices He had to give.

Once our Lord had tried to teach them humility by taking a child and placing it in their midst. For a little time they were ashamed of their pride, but they soon forgot all about the child and were as forward as ever.

But to-night they *must* learn their lesson. He cannot give Himself to the proud. He exalts the humble, but the proud He sends empty away. As they could not learn from a little child, He will give them a better model. They shall learn from a God.

Rising from table, He lays aside His upper garments, takes water in a basin, girds Himself with a towel, and kneels before Peter to wash his feet. Peter, with wide-open eyes, has watched our Lord make His preparations. He cannot believe his senses. Jesus, his Master and Lord, the Son of the living God, wash his feet! Completely bewildered he asks :

“ Lord, dost Thou wash *my* feet ? ”

“What I do, thou knowest not now,” Jesus answers, “but thou shalt know hereafter.” He was so calm, so meek, so resolute. Yet Peter could not bring himself to obey, and he answers in his rough, loyal-hearted way :

“Thou shalt never wash my feet.” Jesus knows Peter. One word will overcome him—one threatening word. “If I wash thee not, thou shalt have no part with Me.” Away went Peter’s wilfulness. Bowing his head and stretching out his hands, he cried :

“Lord, not only my feet, but also my hands and my head.”

Kneeling before each, Jesus washed his feet. Judas’ turn came, and with exceeding great love our Lord bathed that poor sinner’s feet and, tender as a mother, wiped them with the towel wherewith He was girded. But no sign of sorrow, no passing gleam of love softened the traitor’s heart, and rising, Jesus turned sadly away.

The Apostles were humbled now, for nothing humbles us so much as seeing the humiliation of one we venerate and love. They had seen their Lord and Master kneel before them, loose the latchet of their shoes, and wash their dust-stained feet. A great remedy for a great evil.

Jesus took up His garments and sat down again in their midst. There was a silence in the room, a hush had fallen upon them.

"You are clean," Jesus said, "but not all. Amen, I say to you, one of you is about to betray Me." The words struck horror into their hearts. One *of them* a traitor, one whom He had fed and clothed and instructed, whom He had chosen out of thousands, and given powers great as those of Elias of old, whom He had loved and cared for and protected for three years past—one of these about to betray Him! "Is it I, Lord?" they cry in anguish. They cannot suspect each other, so they fear themselves. Eleven times the words are repeated, and Jesus reassures each trembling heart. "Is it I, Lord?" said the traitor in low, sunken tones. Still lower our Lord answers, "Thou hast said it."

The moment for giving the gift has come. Our Lord's love can wait no longer. He must come nearer and nearer to those friends of His, they must feel within them the throb of His Sacred Heart, His Blood must flow in their veins, His strength support them when the hour of temptation comes.

"He took bread, and giving thanks, broke and said :

" 'Take ye and eat, this is My Body, which shall be delivered for you ; this do for the commemoration of Me.' "

"He took the chalice, saying :

“ ‘This chalice is the New Testament in My Blood ; this do ye, as often as you shall drink for the commemoration of Me.’ ”

Bending low in adoration the Apostles receive our Lord, Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity. Simply as Simeon took the Infant God from His Mother's arms, do they take Him from His sacred hands. They hear His word and believe. They receive Him and adore.

And Judas, as he bent his knee and received the consecrated chalice and the Living Bread, did he think of another feast to which one came not having on a wedding garment? Did he think of the weeping and gnashing of teeth reserved for those who receive unworthily? Another chance thrown away, and with his heart more hardened still, he leaves the supper-room and goes out into the exterior darkness.

The meal was over, but Jesus lingered yet a little amongst the clean of heart to tell them of the burning love of His Sacred Heart, to tell not them only, but every little child who through their teaching would come to know and believe in Him.

“ Little children,” He said, “ I give you a new commandment. That you love one another as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this shall all men know that

you are My disciples, if you have love one for another."

"Let not your heart be troubled. I am going away from you, but I will come again and will take you to Myself, that where I am you also may be." "And I will ask the Father, and He shall give you another Paraclete, that He may abide with you for ever, the Spirit of truth . . . Who shall abide with you and be in you."

"I will not leave you orphans ; I will come to you."

"He that keepeth My commandments, he it is that loveth Me, and he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him and will manifest Myself to him."

"Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you ; not as the world giveth do I give unto you. . . . You have heard that I said to you, 'I go away and I come to you.' If you loved Me, you would indeed be glad, because I go to the Father. . . . And now I have told you before it come to pass, that when it shall come to pass you may believe."

"As the Father hath loved Me, I also have loved you. Abide in My love."

"Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends. You are My friends, if you do the things that I command ou. I will not now call you servants, for the

servant knoweth not what his lord doth. But I have called you friends. . . . You have not chosen Me; but I have chosen you, that you should go, and should bring forth fruit, and your fruit should remain."

"Amen, amen, I say to you, if you ask the Father anything in My name, He will give it you. . . . Ask, and you shall receive, that your joy may be full."

How often we ask for prayers. "Pray for me," we say to our friends. "Pray for me," we say to the saints, to the holy angels, to our Blessed Lady, but do we ever think that there is Another Who prays for us, Who prayed for us on earth and prays for us still in Heaven! This last night of His on earth He said to His Heavenly Father:

"Keep them in My name, whom Thou hast given Me, that they may be one as We also are. Whilst I was with them I kept them in Thy name. Keep them from evil. They are not of this world, as I also am not of the world.

"Father, I will that where I am they also whom Thou hast given Me may be with Me, that they may see My glory."

Shall we not ask Him, "our Advocate with the Father," to go on saying for us in Heaven the beautiful prayers He said on earth? Shall we not tell Him we want to be His always, to

be kept from evil and from the wicked cruel world where there is no love and no peace? He says so tenderly, "Put Me in remembrance and let us plead together." Can God refuse us anything if our Lord pleads together with us?

Is our Lord's love satisfied yet? There is no love without suffering. His love is not satisfied yet, but His Passion is very near.

XXXV.

THE KING SUFFERING.

“He was bruised for our sins.”—Is. liii.

THE second watch of Thursday night—about ten o'clock, as we should say—has begun. Late as it is we can see, for the clear paschal moon is lighting up the night. There is a stir in the palace of the High Priest on Mount Sion. Servants are gathering in the courtyard, messengers speeding in different directions; some to the Temple for the levitical guard, others to Fort Antonia for two hundred of the Roman soldiery. Weapons are being handed about—spears, swords, clubs—lanterns and torches collected, not lit yet, it is too early. There is haste and confusion, ordering and counter-ordering; but there is no noise, no clattering of arms, no shouts, no trampling of feet. A dead silence is observed. The Ancients, presiding over the preparations, enjoin absolute secrecy.

There is another sight a few yards off. Jesus is leaving the cenacle, the upper room, to die the death of a felon. Following Him closely are His eleven, His faithful ones brimful

of love and loyalty. He has been opening out His Heart to them, telling them how much He loves them, and they are glowing with enthusiasm. He has spoken of betrayal, so they determine to be watchful and see that the traitor gets no advantage from his infamy. The little company has two swords for use in case of need. But when have they ever had to protect their Master, Him Who was mighty in word and work? His enemies have boasted times without number that they would put Him to death, but they have never dared to touch a hair of His head. So will it be now. They may make an attempt, but Jesus will use His Divine power and no harm will come.

As they go through the vineyards they tell our Lord that, if danger should arise, they will be staunch and true, and dare everything for His sake. He may rely upon their support and fidelity. Poor Apostles! They were so much in earnest and meant every word they said. But they did not know their Master, and they did not know themselves. They did not know that our Lord willed to suffer, and that His sufferings, of infinite value, were to be a treasure for the whole human race till the end of time. They did not know themselves. How cowardly they were, how much afraid of suffering, and that any feeling of bravery they might have came from their hope in His supernatura

protection. No wonder our Lord said, "It is expedient for you that I go." They would not feel their weakness till their support was taken away. The time of their humiliation was very near, and our Lord, like a loving Master, had warned them of it.

Through the vineyards on the slopes of Orphel they go, over the brook Kedron, out to the little farm of Gethsemani. The Apostles knew the spot well, having often spent the night there with their Master, Who loved it because it was quiet. They pass through the gate all together. Then Jesus stops and looks around, looks at those loved faces, some of them for the last time before His death. He knows each so well, knows what is best for each. They must not all see His agony, they could not bear it. To eight of them He says:

"Sit you here while I go yonder to pray." Such words He often said before beginning His long night prayers. So the Apostles, after watching Him out of sight, settled themselves down, sad and tired, to rest.

But three—Peter, James, and John—follow after their Master. They have had a private invitation. To the eager sons of Salome Jesus had once made a promise: "My chalice indeed you shall drink." To-night He keeps His word. They shall share His chalice with Him.

As they go up the Garden slope, a change passes over our Lord, and John notes it immediately. The quickness of His step has gone. His limbs move heavily. His head is sunk forward on His breast. Through the Garden He leads them slowly; slowly and sadly the Apostles follow.

"My soul is sorrowful even unto death," He says. They look up into His face and see there, plainer than words can say, the fear and heaviness of His soul.

"Stay you here and watch with Me," He adds, pointing to a spot where the bright beams of the paschal moon fall. A stone's throw further on He went out of the brightness into the shadow thrown by the Temple Mount. Looking back He can see His own: Peter, with his sword at his feet, ready in case of alarm; John's young head shining in the white light; and James, with his sad, upturned face. They strain their eyes, but cannot pierce the darkness that surround Him; and, sick with anguish and dread of coming sorrow, they sink on the ground. Jesus is alone in His agony.

"*He began to fear.*" What is it that makes our hearts beat fast, our breath come short or scarcely come at all; that makes our hands clammy, our foreheads damp, our whole soul stand still within us? What is it? Fear. Fear of the dark, of the flashing lightning, of

the rolling thunder ; fear of pain, of disgrace, of death.

It is not strange that we should fear ; we are so puny, so easily startled, so easily hurt. But One amongst us, *Who was a giant to run the way ; the Lord, mighty and strong* (Ps. xxiii.), *wise in heart, mighty in strength* ; He, too, has felt the horror of fear. This is strange. It is true His body was sensitive, as ours never can be, His nerves more highly strung ; but He was still the " God of Heaven, strong and terrible " (2 Esdras i.) Yet *He began to fear*. Was it that the suffering was beyond bearing, the trial too great, the chalice too full ? That could not be. Nothing natural or supernatural could have conquered the soul of God made man. Of His own free will He has chosen to feel all we feel, even the sickening horror of fear. *Thou also art wounded as well as we. Thou art become like unto us.*

He fell flat on the ground in an agony. The whole of His Passion was before Him—the traitor's kiss, the blow on the cheek, the unjust sentence, the scourging, the crowning with thorns, the mocking of the white robe, the shouts of the rabble, Pilate's condemnation, the way of the Cross, His Mother's anguish, Calvary. He felt the pain, He heard the shouts, He saw the hideous faces of the rabble round the Cross. He saw the soul of

Peter after his sin, the soul of the traitor Judas.

"O, My Father," He prayed, "if it is possible, let this chalice pass from Me. Nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt." Over and over again He said the words, as one by one the scenes of His sufferings passed through His mind. "Not as I will, but as Thou wilt." Nearly an hour went by. Then He rose and went to His three Apostles. Still and unconscious they lay on the ground, their garments folded tightly about them, for the night was chill. They were asleep and did not hear the faltering footstep. Jesus looked upon them—His chosen ones, the stoutest hearts and most generous natures of the little band. They had left Him alone in His sorrow. Will He wake them? Or will He let them sleep on? There was no hesitation in our Lord's mind. It would be kind to let them sleep, but kinder by far to rouse and let them feel how little they could trust in their own strength.

"Simon, couldst thou not watch one hour with Me?" With a start Peter came to himself, and looking into our Lord's sorrowing face had nothing to answer. Rousing the other two, Jesus said gently :

"Pray, lest you enter into temptation." Determined to do better, Peter, James, and John sat up and began their prayers. Jesus

went back into the shade of the olive trees, and sinking on his knees before His Heavenly Father fell into an agony. The sins of all men were upon Him. He felt their number, their shamefulness, their malice. And they were His now. He had taken them upon Himself, and was going to answer for each one. All the penalty of sin He would bear, all the shame, all the horror. Oh, if we only knew what sin is to God, what it was to our Lord! But we cannot. There is nothing we can compare to it. There are things we loathe and fear and hate, but not as our Lord hated and feared and loathed sin. Like a burden it lay upon Him. Yet if He did not carry it, we should die and be lost for ever. Once more the prayer came :

“O, My Father, if this chalice cannot pass away except I drink it, Thy will be done.” They were His, those sins of ours. He had charged Himself with their payment, and the punishment for each will be scored upon His most sacred body. “Father, Thy will, not Mine, be done.” See what it costs Him.

Red drops of blood stood upon His forehead and trickled down upon the ground. The mossy roots of the olive trees were watered with It. His garments were wet with It.

Scarcely able to stand, our Lord rose and went to His Apostles. Surely, surely He would

find them watching, ready to soothe and comfort and welcome Him! "He findeth them asleep, for their eyes were heavy." Once again He woke them, and gently reproached them. "They knew not what to answer Him," says St. Mark.

"Being in an agony, He prayed the longer." Another hour of prayer, then for the third and last time He came to the Apostles. They slept—and the hour of temptation was at hand.

In the distance the red flames of torches gleamed, and the spears and flashing helmets of the soldiers were seen through the trees. A mob approached noiselessly; it entered the Garden. A rabble it was, armed with heavy-headed clubs and swords, with whom priests and Ancients mingled, giving directions and keeping order. Following them came a maniple of Roman soldiers with shields and spears as if to do battle. Hundreds there were, but to Jesus there seemed but one, *the traitor Judas*.

"Behold, *he that will betray Me* is at hand," He said. In a moment the Apostles were roused and stood firmly by our Lord's side—there was no sign of shrinking in their faces. Peter stood with his hand on his sword, waiting one word of command from our Lord.

Jesus stepped forward to meet the crowd. His face was white, and thick in His hair

stood the blood-drops His agony had brought forth. With the majesty of a King, He asked :

“Whom seek ye?”

“Jesus of Nazareth,” was the blunt answer.

“I am He,” Jesus replied. So sudden and unexpected were the words, so grand was His dignity, that the soldiers staggered back as if struck, and fell one upon the other. Fearless and proud stood the Apostles like a body-guard round their Master, rejoicing in their hearts over His easy victory.

“Whom seek ye?” again our Lord asked.

Timidly this time came the answer, “Jesus of Nazareth.”

“I have told you that I am He ; if, therefore, you seek Me, let these go their way.”

Still no stir in the crowd ; the signal promised by the traitor had not been given, and for fear of blundering the soldiers would not make the arrest. At last, goaded on by the chief priests, Judas came forward to commit the most awful crime the earth has ever witnessed. As a loving disciple he approached his Master and offered Him the kiss of peace.

“Hail, Rabbi!” he said.

“Friend,” our Lord asked, “whereto art thou come? Judas, dost thou betray the Son of man with a kiss?”

No time for more. Impatiently the Temple-

guard pushed Judas aside, surrounded Jesus, and proceeded to take Him prisoner.

"Lord, shall we strike with the sword?" cried Peter; and without waiting for an answer he aimed a reckless blow at the man nearest to him. With one stroke of his sword he severed Malchus' ear. Jesus stretched out His hand.

"Put up thy sword, Peter," He said gently. "The chalice which My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it? Thinkest thou that I cannot ask My Father, and He will give me presently more than twelve legions of angels? How, then, shall the Scriptures be fulfilled, that so it must be done." Then, with His almighty hand He healed the wound Peter had made. He reached out His sacred hands to His captors; they were bound with rough cords, a thick knot tied, and He was dragged off by the Roman soldiers, followed by the priests and Ancients, and the rabble they had collected together.

But the Apostles—where were they? They had escaped under cover of the night. All left Him—only too glad to get off with their lives. What a bitter moment for our Lord! Betrayed by one Apostle, forsaken by all. And these the salt of the earth—His chosen ones, His first communicants, newly ordained priests! Where

have they gone? Where could such broken-hearted men go but to Mary, the Mother of Jesus! She had always been a mother to them; she had helped to soften their rude characters, to bend their stubborn wills, and bring them to be sorry when they had grieved her Son. So they go to her by bye-paths and dark ways. In the upper room they met each other again, and found Mary there. She knew all they have to tell—her calm white face showed what an agony she had undergone—but she received them all with a mother's loving compassion, and kept them safe out of the way of temptation, All but two. Peter and John were not with the rest.

The double palace on Mount Sion was reached a little after midnight. At the gate stood a portress, torch in hand. The men of distinction passed through the wicket first, followed by the servants and mob, then the Roman soldiers with the Prisoner, His hands bound. Close behind Him came the Beloved Disciple. His flight had been short; his love had overcome his fear and he had rejoined his Master.

Before entering the gateway John stood waiting for Peter, whose figure could just be seen in the distance, slowly and cautiously advancing. One word John said to the portress, to whom

he was known, and Peter was admitted into the courtyard. John pressed forward, and followed our Lord into the presence of Annas; but Peter remained behind, and tried to take up his position at the brazier as a member of the household. His heart was breaking. His Master betrayed, bound, fallen helpless and unresisting into the hands of His bitterest enemies. Could He be the Messiah? Could He be God? And if He were not God, but only a weak man unable to save Himself, what safety would there be for His disciples? Peter felt afraid, and scarcely dared lift his eyes to scan the faces of the noisy group.

Suddenly the portress looked at him and said: "Art not thou also one of this Man's disciples?"

"I am not," Peter answered. Fear of man made Peter fall. To save himself was his one thought now.

"Thou also wast with Jesus the Galilean," cried another maid to the miserable Apostle.

"Woman," answered Peter, indignantly, "I know Him not. I neither know nor understand what thou sayest."

Over and over again, first to one inquirer and then to another, Peter denied his Master. Meanwhile the mock trial was going on before Annas. John was present. He saw a mailed hand fall heavily on his Master's face. He

heard the gentle question : “ Why strikest thou Me ? ” He saw the blue bruise swell the cheek and mar the beautiful countenance, and he heard no remonstrance from the standers-by. Christ, Who had been so courteous, Who had always taken the part of the weak, defended the feeble and friendless, was left without one to raise a voice in His behalf.

He was sent bound to Caiaphas, who was eagerly expecting Him.

One hour Peter had stood in the dangerous occasion of sin. Too loving to abandon our Lord altogether, too cowardly to own Him as his Master, the poor disciple fell deeper and deeper into sin ; and when at last, after joining freely in the conversation with an air of assumed indifference, one of the men said scornfully to him, “ Surely thou art one of them, for thou art a Galilean, even thy speech doth discover thee,” beside himself with fear, Peter rose and confronted the man, and with a terrible oath swore he knew Him not. Hark ! far away we hear a sound. Morning is coming, for surely that was cock-crow. Peter turned pale, his Master’s words rushed back to his mind : “ Before the cock crow twice, thou wilt deny Me thrice.” A fearful struggle took place in the breast of the fallen man. Satan was there with taunting words—his sin was too great to be forgiven ; he need not look for mercy—he

was as bad as Judas every bit ; how would he ever dare to rejoin the Apostles ? How could he ever look into John's innocent face ? No, let him go and make an end of himself.

“ Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat, but *I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not,*” Jesus had once said to Peter. O blessed prayer ! It was Peter's safety now.

Not long was Caiaphas in finding our Lord guilty of death. Then he broke up the assembly and bade its members come together again at daybreak to renew the sentence ; for to condemn a man at night was, by the law, an illegal act.

Left to themselves the soldiers led Jesus into the courtyard where Peter sat. As our Lord passed by the group of servants the bright blaze lit up His face for one moment, and turning His pitying eyes He looked on Peter. Peter, tender-hearted as a child, broke down completely ; tears of heartfelt sorrow gushed from his eyes, and going out *he wept bitterly*. Away he went, away from the company of the wicked. He must be alone to think over his sin and wash it away with his tears.

“ Bring the impostor here,” shouted the soldiers standing round the fire ; “ let us get

some fun out of Him." Jesus was dragged forward ; more wood was heaped on the brazier, and a bright flame sprang up. Then they "that held Him mocked Him and struck Him." With their mailed gloves they gave Him blows, with their clenched fists they hit His head. They kicked Him, shook Him, tore His hair and plucked His beard. One cowardly ruffian spat in His face, raising a shout of derision from his fellows, who followed his example in quick succession.

"A pretty prophet this," said one.

"Blind His eyes," shouted another; "let's see if He knows who we are?" A rag was brought and tied round the sacred head and an awful blow struck.

"Prophecy unto us, O Christ, who is he that struck Thee?" they cried.

No sound passed those purple lips ; not a shade of anger showed itself in the dim eyes. "Be angry, and sin not," says Holy Scripture. Surely if ever there was a time to be angry it was when God, made man, was mocked and spat upon by His own creatures ; when their hands were raised to strike the Almighty, "the terrible and strong." But no, the time of wrath is not yet come. It is the season of mercy and compassion, our Lord's time for laying up stores of grace and pardon for us ; a time for Him to give proof of His infinite love, and

patience, and long-suffering. See how He is using it : in the Garden He was in an agony, on the road to Sion insulted, in the private chamber of Annas' palace struck and reviled, agony and shame every hour increasing. Oh, look how bruised and battered He is! The light from the torches plays upon His face. How mishandled it is, how shamefully dealt with! As we stand looking at Him, of what are we thinking? Do we feel innocent as if we had no share in His pain? Not one amongst us can feel like that, not even Mary, the Immaculate Mother. She was without stain of sin, but her sinlessness was bought by His Precious Blood.

When we see Him buffeted, and beaten, and mocked, we must bow down our heads, and tell Him that if it had not been for us He would not have suffered so much. Cannot we love Him now, and compassionate Him, and feel sorrow for having wounded Him so often? Had it been our own father who was suffering for our fault, think how heart-broken we should be, how every blow struck at him and evil word spoken would have pierced us to the heart.

XXXVI.

THE DEATH OF THE KING.

“Who hath loved us and washed us from our sins in His own Blood.”—APOC. i.

THE sun of Good Friday rose. God, as usual, gave His beautiful light to the world. The birds sang in the branches, the doves cooed in the clefts of the rocks, the anemones around Jerusalem turned their blood-red chalices to the light. Thousands of thousands in Jerusalem were waking refreshed from sleep. The trembling Apostles, gathered round Mary, were watching and praying. The Sanhedrists, on the look out for the first streak of dawn, betook themselves to the Council chamber. Bruised and mocked and spat upon, Jesus awaits His summons.

It came. The soldiers were to bring Him before the Council. In the President's chair sat Caiaphas ; around were the chiefs of Israel, the pick of the nation. Were they there to render justice, to avenge a wrong, to set free the innocent ? No. Jesus had long since been condemned. Their business this day was to make out a case which, taken before Pilate,

would result in condemnation and the death of the Cross. False witnesses, men bribed to lie, were called in and gave their evidence, but it did not agree—how should it! Jesus listened in silence.

“Answerest Thou nothing to the things that are laid to Thy charge by these men?” the High Priest asked. But He held His peace and answered nothing.

“I adjure Thee by the living God, that Thou tell us, if Thou be the Christ, the Son of God,” the High Priest urged.

“Thou hast said it,” Jesus answered; “nevertheless I say to you, hereafter you shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of the power of God, and coming in the clouds of Heaven.”

“He hath blasphemed, what further need have we of witnesses? Behold now you have heard the blasphemy, what think you?” But they answering said:

“He is guilty of death.” And the High Priest rent his garments.

With heavy chains about His sacred hands, Jesus was hurried through the streets of Jerusalem to the Fortress Antonia. No secrecy was observed now, the more openly He was mishandled the better. The people would understand that their rulers had tried and condemned the young Prophet, and that they had good

reasons for their severity. Across the city they went, passing under the Temple walls to the Governor's house.

Pilate, as Procurator, or care-taker of Judea, generally resided at Cesarea, by the sea, but at the time of the Passover he came to Jerusalem to overawe with his soldiery the teeming thousands who, from all parts of the inhabited world, flocked to the Holy City for the feast. His office gave him great power, but he exercised it with such wanton cruelty that the people both feared and hated him.

Jesus was brought into his presence.

"What accusation bring you against this Man?" he asked. The question was simple enough and absolutely necessary; but proud men are touchy, and the chief priests answered arrogantly:

"If He were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered Him up to thee." Pilate, disgusted, turned on his heel:

"Take Him you, and judge Him according to your law."

"It is not lawful for us to put any man to death." This was the sum of their desires—that He should be put to death. Pilate was to take the hint. "He incites the people to rebellion," they said; "He forbids tribute to be paid to Cæsar, and He proclaims Himself Christ the King."

Of one only of these charges did Pilate take notice. Drawing Jesus aside he asked Him if He were indeed a King. And Jesus answered :

“My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would certainly strive, that I should not be delivered to the Jews ; but now My kingdom is not from hence.”

“Art Thou a King then?” Pilate asked again.

“Thou sayest that I am a King. For this was I born, and for this came I into the world.” Pilate watched our Lord as He spoke, and was awed by His dignity, the solemnity of His manner, the calm courage of His bearing. Going out into the courtyard where the Ancients and the rabble stood in anxious expectation, he said :

“I find no cause in this Man.” Then there was confusion and shouting, clenching of fists, and menacing threats. “He stirreth up the people,” they shouted, “teaching throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee to this place.”

Galilee! Was He from the north then? Much relieved, Pilate determined to send the Prisoner to Herod, the Tetrarch of that province. Thus he would be quit of an unpleasant business and pay a compliment to the Tetrarch, with whom he had a quarrel. So he sent Jesus away to Herod. Once more He was hurried

over the bridge, across the valley, past the lordly mansions of the rich, through the thronged streets, amidst the curious, idle, holiday crowd. There were no hosannas for Him that day, no petitions to be healed, no cry for mercy. He was helpless Himself, He was wounded and sick to death. For such sufferers there was little pity in Jerusalem.

Herod's palace reached, Jesus was brought into the presence of the great man. He was surrounded with almost royal pomp and there was a look of expectant pleasure upon his wicked face. He had long wished to see this Man of Whom all Israel spoke, Who worked miracles as great as those of Elias, and Who by His eloquence drew the whole world after Him. "And he questioned Him in many words. But He answered him nothing." The Scribes and Ancients stood by, and heaped accusation upon accusation upon Him—still He was silent. Herod, beside himself with rage and disappointment, determined upon sport of some kind. Calling his soldiers about him, he ordered the prisoner to be arrayed in a white festive garment and to be mocked and insulted as a fool. Then he sent Him back to the Governor. Pilate and Herod were made friends that day.

Back through the narrow streets, across the valley, through the heartless crowd, pushed and

dragged and buffeted, went our Blessed Saviour. And once more Pilate took up the cause. The result was the same. Jesus was innocent. Still the Scribes and the Ancients repeated their calumnies and excited the people to fury. Pilate tried to meet them half way.

“I find no cause in Him,” he said. “I will chastise Him, therefore, and let Him go.” *Therefore!* Because He was innocent He was to be chastised! And yet the words had truth in them. Because He was the sinless Lamb of God, He was to be a victim. It was the Lamb without blemish that was offered in sacrifice, and that Passover Jesus was to be the one acceptable sacrifice, the one only *Lamb of God*.

Scourged. “The Lord was pleased to bruise Him: ‘For the wickedness of My people have I struck Him’” (Is. liii.) He was tied to a low pillar and ruffians were chosen to wield the scourges. These were thongs of leather, weighted with lead and bone. Wielded by arms of giant strength, they whizzed through the air, and fell in quick succession upon the sacred flesh. It was scarred and torn, the Blood flowed fast and bespattered the pavement; the scourges were saturated with It, the garments of the soldiers coloured with It. Yet not a groan escaped the sacred lips, not a sigh. They moved, indeed, but in prayer for the executioners, prayer for all mankind. At last, even

Roman arms were tired and the lashes were flung aside. Jesus was unbound, and, scarcely able to stand, reached out His hands for His garment.

But the sport was not ended. This was a King—and a King of the Jews. Not often had the brutal soldiery a chance of mocking the subject nation. They will treat this Man as a King, and for once a Roman will bend the knee to a Jew. Jesus is raised on a stool, and the whole band gather around. “Stripping Him, they clothe Him with purple. And plaiting a crown of thorns, they put it upon His head, and a reed in His right hand. And bowing the knee before Him, they began to salute Him; they mocked Him, saying, ‘Hail, King of the Jews!’ and spitting upon Him, they took the reed and struck His head.” St. Paul speaks of the “meekness and modesty of Christ.” “*He prayed for His transgressors.*” (Is. liii.)

The scourging over and the mocking, Jesus returned to Pilate “a worm and no man.” His robes clung to the bleeding wounds; His hair was steeped in blood; the prickly crown pierced His forehead. Pilate brought Him forth to the people. “I will scourge Him and let Him go,” were his words awhile ago, and now, in the hope of gaining his way, he said, “Behold the Man!” But there were

stronger wills than his at work. As he spoke an awful cry was raised :

“Crucify Him! Crucify Him!” Pilate made one weak attempt after another to save his Prisoner's life, but in vain. “Not this Man, but Barabbas,” the people shouted, when a robber and murderer was offered for their choice.

“If thou release this Man thou art not Cæsar's friend, for whosoever maketh himself a king speaketh against Cæsar.” That threat moved Pilate. It rang in his ear like a knell, and their voices prevailed. Taking water, he washed his hands before the people, saying, “I am innocent of the blood of this just Man; look you to it.” And the whole people answering, said, “His Blood be upon us, and upon our children.” They asked for it as a curse, and Jesus gave it as a blessing.

THE WAY OF THE CROSS.

“Bearing His own Cross, He went forth.” He was condemned as a malefactor, and malefactors carried their own crosses. The beams were placed lengthwise, and tied with strong cords. Three crosses were brought up to the courtyard. Jesus stretched out His hands for His. It was dropped heavily upon His shoulder, and the “title” written by Pilate in

black letters on a white board was hung round His neck. "*Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews,*" it ran. The procession started. Clearing the way on horseback came the centurion; next a guard of soldiers accompanying the prisoners; then the chief priests, Scribes, and Pharisees; and, bringing up the rear, the crowd—servants, artisans, hucksters, camel-drivers, the scum of the populace—yelling, hooting, hissing Him, Who had gone about doing good.

To the north of the city lay Calvary, not far away, but it took the procession a good hour to reach the spot. The narrow streets were densely packed with men, women, and children, strangers from distant lands, and country people from the provinces.

Slow and tedious was the pace of the escort, and Jesus, weak and exhausted, found the weight of the Cross more than His human strength could bear. There was a sudden stoppage! Jesus fell. Oh, how the soldiers struck Him! how they dragged at His robes and kicked Him! He rose at length and received back the heavy Cross. He would try to carry it again, if the executioners wished.

There came a turn in the road, and there, standing by a portico, was John, with Mary, the Mother of Jesus. The centurion passed her, and the two thieves—then Jesus came in sight. O, Mother Mary, how will you bear

to look on that face disfigured, bruised, battered; on that form bent beneath the load of the Cross! They met. No word of greeting passed between the Mother and Son, but a smile of love lighted up the Divine features. She knew Him by that smile. One look He gave her. One look of His made Peter a penitent. One look made Mary the Queen of Martyrs. With unfaltering step she followed in the red footprints of her Son.

A stranger from the country, a Cyrenean, was compelled to carry the Cross Jesus is no longer able to bear. "From the sole of the foot unto the top of the head there was no soundness" in Him. His spirit was willing, but His flesh was weak. At last the place of execution was reached. It was a low mound outside the city gates, where many a thief and robber had been executed and buried. Jesus "is reputed with the wicked," and treated as one of them.

The centurion took up his post and kept off the multitude, whilst the soldiers, four to each criminal, began their work.

The three upright beams are sunk in the earth and made fast by wooden wedges. The order is given for the prisoners to unrobe. Jesus lowers His tunic, once spotless white, now "a dyed garment," dyed with the Precious Blood. It clings fast to His wounds and has to be

forced away, opening anew each swelling sore. At the bidding of the executioner He stretches Himself on the uneven ground and places His hands over the holes in the cross-beam. The hammer is raised, a blow is struck. The sound, carried far, falls upon the listening ear of the Mother. Again it comes, sharp and clear, and with each blow fresh Blood gushes forth, fresh wounds are made in the Mother's heart. The fingers contract, the sinews of the arms shrink. Both hands are fastened now, and cords are thrown round the sacred body.

"Jesus of Nazareth in the midst," shouts the centurion; the robbers one "on the right hand, the other on the left." Jesus is hauled up and the beams are fastened together. The feet are crossed and a nail is driven through. Oh, the agony of that moment! As on a rack, the muscles and nerves and sinews are stretched, the Blood flows from hands and feet, and the large open wounds are edged with purple. Listen! The parched lips move; Jesus is speaking: "*Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!*" Over and over again the cry goes up, "a strong cry with tears." "Forgive *them*," Jesus says, not forgive the executioners, lest we should think He meant only those four soldiers whose hands had driven in the nails. "Forgive all," He would say, "who have brought about My death, all

sinner." "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do."

"Now for the spoils," the soldiers say, and seating themselves on a boulder near, they take His garments and make four parts, to every soldier a part, and also His coat. Now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout. They say then one to another: "Let us not cut it, but let us cast lots for it whose it shall be; that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of by the prophets, saying, '*They divided My garments among them, and upon My vesture they cast lots.*'" And the soldiers indeed did these things, and they sat and watched Him."

Nearer and nearer draws the crowd, up the little mound close to the foot of the Cross. "And the people stood beholding." They read the inscription over His head: "Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews," written in Hebrew, in Greek, and in Latin. The chief priests come closer. Can it be that Pilate has dared to put up such a title! They send messengers off at once to the Governor. Not "the King of the Jews" should he have written, but "He *said* 'I am the King of the Jews.'" Pilate's answer came back quickly, and this time it was short and firm: "What I have written, I have written."

How the title of *King* clung to Jesus. As a Babe at Bethlehem, He was sought for as the "new-born King." Dying, His Cross is surmounted by the title of "King"! The Greeks read it as they pass by the place of execution; the Romans read it when they come to gaze. And the Ancients, furious and undone, read it, and passing by "blaspheme Him, wagging their heads and saying: 'Vah! Thou that destroyest the Temple of God, and in three days dost rebuild it, save Thy own self. If Thou be the Son of God, come down from the Cross. He saved others, Himself He cannot save. Let Christ, the King of Israel, come down from the Cross, that we may see and believe.'" Thus did the Ancients openly scorn our Lord, to show the strangers of Jerusalem that He was not the King of their choice, and that they had "no King but Cæsar."

A dark shadow is overspreading the sky. There is a dull heaviness in the air, the birds fly low in terror, the crowd shudders, grows hushed, and gradually draws off. The gloom spreads. "The sun is darkened." Still unsubdued, one hardened sinner blasphemes, "saying: 'If Thou be the Christ, save Thyself and us.' But the other answering, rebuked him, saying:

"Neither dost thou fear God, seeing thou art under the same condemnation! And we

indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds, but this Man hath done no evil.' And he said to Jesus :

“ ‘ Lord, remember me when Thou shalt come into Thy kingdom.’ And Jesus said to him :

“ ‘ Amen, I say to thee, this day thou shalt be with me in Paradise.’ ” What a kingly promise, and how tender ! The thief was parched with thirst, racked by pain, dying by inches. “ *This day,* ” Jesus says—the crucified often lingered for many days—his pain will be over, his soul set free, his spirit at rest. “ Lord,” the thief had called Him, and Jesus, as a gracious Lord, answers, “ *Thou shalt be with Me in Paradise,* ” in peace and gladness.

Close to the Cross, beneath its very shadow, stand “ His Mother, and His Mother’s sister, Mary of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalen.” Close to the Mother, with his hand in hers, is the Apostle John. He only left Jesus to go to Mary. He has guarded her on the way of the Cross, he is guarding her now, and she is helping him to bear the martyrdom of compassion. Jesus looks down upon the little group, so faithful, so loving, so true.

“ Woman,” He says to Mary, “ behold thy son.” Then His dim eyes rest upon John. To him, the virgin Apostle, He says :

“ ‘ Behold thy Mother ’ : and from that hour the disciple took her to his own.”

The sun is completely veiled now. How awful the noonday darkness is! Struck to the heart, the insolent rabble, the chief priests, and Ancients hasten home. They can brave it out no longer. They fly from the place of their crime, they seek safety away from their Saviour. Oh, if they had only knelt by Mary's side and struck their breasts there, and asked but one drop of the Precious Blood, what graces they would have received, what comfort they would have given to the broken Hearts of Jesus and Mary!

The soldiers dare not leave their posts. The centurion watches. Jesus at length breaks silence.

"Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani! My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me!" The darkness upon the earth is but a shadow of the darkness in the human soul of Jesus. He is "made a curse for us," and in that moment of supreme abandonment He feels the agony of a soul cut off from its Creator, *forsaken* by God.

Another silence. Not a word spoken, not a sound heard. The wounds in the hands and feet are widening, the lips are parched, the tongue dry as a withered leaf. But the agony of the breaking Heart is worse to bear than all. He looks around. Mary, the sinless one, John, the Beloved Disciple, the penitent Magdalen, the faithful women, and the good thief, these

alone are left Him. But the Jewish crowd, "the multitude," He had loved so dearly, compassionated so tenderly, sought after like a good Shepherd, where were they? Gone, fled, leaving the Precious Blood to fall upon the stone; gone, impenitent and unredeemed, from Calvary, where there was a copious Redemption.

"I thirst," He cried. The soldiers in pity stuck upon a reed a sponge soaked in vinegar. Jesus gently takes it.

"It is finished," and with a loud voice He cries :

"Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit." "Bowing His head He gave up the ghost." The Son returns to His Father, the King to His kingdom, God to God.

It is the ninth hour. In the Temple court thousands of lambs are being offered in sacrifice. The wide-open space is thronged with the men of Israel, with lighted torches in their hands. For an appalling darkness still covered Jerusalem, and men are sick with fear. Hark! an awful sound is heard in the Temple. Pale-faced priests rush through the Nicanor Gate into the Holy Place, and are struck motionless with dismay. The massive curtain before the Holy of Holies is rent in two. That sacred place, so mysteriously consecrated to God in

secret darkness, has by God's own hand been laid bare to the whole world. Under their feet the earth trembles, the rocks are rent, the graves are opened, the dead arise and are seen in the streets of the Holy City. Consternation has fallen upon all. God has forsaken His people.

Upon Calvary's little hill all is peaceful. The sound of the earthquake has died away, the darkness gradually lifted. The soldiers, subdued and softened, look upon the dead face of the Crucified. The centurion exclaims: "Indeed this Man was the Son of God." And his men on the hillock below echo the words, "Indeed this was the Son of God." Pagans they came to Calvary; when they left it they were Christians. The few remaining Jews turn away and go to their homes, striking their breasts.

Still close to the Cross our Blessed Lady stands; the women, who "from afar" had watched for three hours, are near her now. Let us tell over their names and honour them for their strong love. Mary Magdalen is there, as we know; Mary of Cleophas, our Lady's cousin; Mary Salome, mother of James and John. They have ministered to our Lord all through His public life, they have openly declared themselves His disciples, they have kept their faith in Him in trial and persecution,

even the horrors of Calvary they have braved to be near Him to the end.

As evening draws near another detachment of soldiers makes its way to the Mount. They reach it, and, saluting the centurion, proceed to examine the criminals. Pilate has ordered their death to be hastened that the bodies may not pollute the Sabbath. With clubs in hand they approach the two thieves, and with a blow break their legs. "*This day thou shalt be with Me in Paradise,*" Jesus had promised; and the soul of the good thief goes to join its Saviour in His Heavenly Kingdom.

They stand before Jesus. "*You shall not break a bone of Him,*" it was written. The soldiers lower their clubs and pass Him by. "He is dead," they say. But one, more cautious or more cruel than the rest, thrusts his spear into the right side, and "immediately there came out blood and water." The bodies may be buried now in the pit reserved for executions. According to Jewish law, mourning for criminals was forbidden.

Yet it was written, "His sepulchre shall be glorious." How shall these words of prophecy be fulfilled? For Mary, his Mother, is poor, the holy women are without influence, and the Apostles are dispersed and fled.

There was a man of noble birth called Joseph of Arimathea, who, like Nicodemus,

was a secret disciple of our Lord. He was "a councillor, a good and just man, who had not consented to their counsels and doings. Setting aside their authority, and braving the anger of the Sanhedrists, he went in boldly to Pilate and begged the body of Jesus." And Pilate commanded that it should be delivered to him.

With Nicodemus, his friend, Joseph hastened to the bazaars, and bought a hundred pounds weight of myrrh and aloes and finest linen, and, armed with Pilate's written command, hastened to Calvary. Think of the relief the holy Mother must have felt when she saw the two friends come forward and claim the sacred remains. With reverent care the heavy nails were taken out, the cords loosened, and the adorable body laid by His Mother's side. She looked upon Him "Whom they pierced." She saw the wide open wounds, the gashes made by the scourges, the blue mark of the mailed glove. She saw the pierced brow. She reverently closed the eyes and kissed the wounded hands and feet; and then, confiding Him to the care of Joseph and Nicodemus, was led aside by John.

In great haste the two friends wrapped the fine linen bands, steeped in strong perfumes, round the limbs, and bore the body in procession to a garden where Joseph possessed a tomb, "wherein no man had been laid." Evening

shadows were falling fast. Soon the Sabbath day of rest would be proclaimed. Rolling the great stone over the opening, the two councilors went back with aching hearts to Jerusalem.

Did Mary Magdalen, when she saw the hasty embalming, recall those gracious words of our Lord, "She comes beforehand for My burial," when her own precious ointment soaked into His feet and saturated His hair? With the dawn of the first day of the week she would bring sweet spices, and finish at leisure what had been so hurriedly begun. Once more she would anoint those sacred feet, once more she would wash them with her penitent tears. Our Lady listened, and blessed her for her love. But she knew that before the sun of the third day rose Jesus would be risen, glorious and beautiful.

XXXVII.

HIS RESURRECTION.

“I am risen, and am still with thee.”—Ps. cxxxviii.

SATURDAY dawned, our Holy Saturday, the last day of what we call Holy Week. The silence of the Sabbath is everywhere. What a beautiful day for our Lord to lie in the tomb, the *Lord's Day*, the day of rest. With Him was buried the last Jewish Sabbath, and with Him there rose a new Lord's Day, the first of the week, the day of triumph and gladness. The streets of Jerusalem are hushed. The rabble has disappeared; there is no clashing of arms to-day, no tramp of soldiers, no cries in the market-place. The streets are still thronged with people, “strangers of Rome, Jews, men out of every nation under heaven,” but they are a subdued and silent multitude. Yesterday's crime hangs like a judgment over the city, and the fear of the earthquake and the darkness still makes men tremble at a sound.

In the upper room there was a wonderful mingling of bitter disappointment and peace. Mary, the Mother of Jesus, was there, and the

calm of her face was indescribable. Her will was so united to God's Will that she shared in the Divine peace. Around her were grouped the holy women, their hearts crushed with sorrow, the brethren of our Lord, and the disciples, full of shame and disappointment. Peter was there, sitting apart, his face hidden in his hands, large tears trickling through his fingers and falling unchecked upon his coarse robe. John was there also, his boyish face aged with a three-hours' agony; Thomas and Philip, and the rest, all there in the upper room with Mary, that Mother of Sorrows. They cannot understand her calm, but to look at her face, so like her Son's, is an unspeakable comfort to them. Besides, they felt safe near her. Outside in the city they feared the Pharisees; in their own hearts they feared their sins; with her only was pity and strength.

And what about the enemies of our Lord, the Pharisees, Ancients, the chief priests, and Scribes? Were they satisfied with yesterday's work? Surely. For all went as they had wished; His arrest was successful, His trial, though not as satisfactory as they would have liked, ended in condemnation. He was sold as a slave, scourged as a slave, and as a slave breathed His last on a cross. They had never hoped for more ignominy than that, even for Him. When they knew He was buried in the

tomb, their minds would be at rest and they would cease from troubling.

So one would have thought. But there is no peace for the wicked. Come, and I will show you what they are doing on this Sabbath-day. We must go to Pilate's palace and seek admittance.

Oh, but the Jews cannot be there, somebody says. It is a feast day, and they may not enter a Gentile's house, or they would be defiled. Even yesterday they stayed outside, and made Pilate come to them.

True, but the consciences of the chief priests are elastic and under their control. Pilate has granted them an interview, but he is angry with them, and shows his contempt by his abrupt answers. "Sir," they begin respectfully, "it has occurred to us that that Seducer promised to rise again on the third day after His death. Of course we are not so foolish as to suppose for one moment that He can keep His word; but those artful disciples of His may come at dead of night and steal away the body, and then give out to the world that Jesus of Nazareth is risen from the grave. Order guards to be placed at the sepulchre that such an imposture may not take place."

"Take your own guard, and guard it to the best of your knowledge," said Pilate disdainfully. He cannot bear the sight of the sneak-

ing hypocrites who have goaded him into his unjust act. Out of the palace they go, forgetting their dignity, their profession of uncommon sanctity, and on the Sabbath order a Roman guard to betake themselves to the new tomb near Mount Calvary, and to guard it day and night. They, too, go to the sepulchre, and with cords and seals make fast the entrance. Then they breathe more freely. No fear now of a pretended resurrection; they have made all safe, and the soldiers will deal promptly with any attempt at violence. They return to Jerusalem, successful men who have warred with the dead and conquered. Little do they know what anguish is in store for them. Jesus, the miracle-worker, is dead, but He will rise glorious and beautiful from the tomb, and will establish a priesthood, in which they will have no share, and which He will bless with His Divine blessing, and to which He will give the command to increase and multiply, to preach and teach throughout the whole world. But they, the abandoned priesthood, the withered branch, will never blossom again, never more bear fruit.

The Roman soldiers, sixty of them, take their posts outside Joseph of Arimathea's tomb. All Saturday they keep guard and redouble their vigilance as night comes on and the third day is about to dawn. Gradually, as the darkness

clears away, a feeling of relief steals over the rough men's hearts. Their nerves had been shocked before by the earthquake and awful darkness, and they had heard that their own centurion, no chicken-hearted man, had struck his breast and said, "Surely this Man was the Son of God." They had feared some visitation of the gods in punishment of their part in the affair. But now they point out to each other the streaks of light in the sky; very soon the worst will be over, a few more hours of guard, and they may go home.

But hark! they hear a low rumbling noise, they feel underfoot the trembling of the earth. One strong man clings to the other, gasping with horror. It is, it is an earthquake. Louder becomes the rumbling, stronger the quivering of the earth. Terror-struck they fall on their faces as dead men.

"Who is like to Thee, glorious in holiness, terrible and praiseworthy, doing wonders?" Who is like to Thee, Jesus Christ, "King of Kings, Lord of Lords"? Impassible, immortal, glorious, our Lord rose from the tomb; His sacred body, "crowned with glory and honour," was united to His soul, never more to be separated from it. Myriads of adoring angels, the whole Heavenly Court, were waiting round the grave to adore the meek Son of man, Who is also Son of God, the brightness of His glory,

and the figure of His substance. There, waiting to accompany Him wherever He went, were millions of His redeemed, "the glory of Christ," who had for thousands of years expected His coming, and whom, first of all, He visited in their prison-house of Limbo. What a song of triumphant love they sang to their King!

And now, where is the King going? St. Ignatius of Loyola answers, "To His Mother, of course." And if we answer, "The Scriptures do not tell us so," he replies quickly that the Scriptures suppose us to have understanding, according as it is written, "*Are ye also without understanding?*" The love of a good son for his mother is wonderfully strong. "To a man who has lost his mother the world can never be the same again," wrote one in an outburst of grief at her loss.

Jesus was a perfect man, with a perfect human heart. He had chosen His Mother, had made her sinless and beautiful and full of grace, that He might be able to love her. And He did love her, and loved her more than any other creature. And that bright Easter morning He hastened with His Heavenly train to meet her who was expecting, expecting! She alone, of the thousands He had taught, believed in His word. She bought no ointment to anoint His sacred body; she did not visit the place of His

rest ; but she waited in fervent prayer for the
sight of her risen, glorious Son.

And He came !

And will she run
With freest love her Child to greet ?
He came ! And she, His creature, fell
Prostrate at her Creator's feet.

He raised her up ; He pressed her head
Gently against His wounded side ;
He gave her spirit strength to bear
The sight of Jesus glorified.

From out His eyes, from out His wounds,
A power of awful beauty shone ;
Oh, how the speechless Mother gazed
Upon the glory of her Son !

She could not doubt ; 'twas truly He
Who had been with her from the first,—
The very eyes, the mouth, the hair,
The very Babe Whom she had nursed.

Her burden o'er the desert sand,
The helpmate of her toils,—'twas He,
He, by whose death-bed she had stood
Long hours beneath the bleeding tree.

When wilt thou drink that beauty in ?
Mother ! when wilt thou satisfy
With those adoring looks of love
The thirst of thine ecstatic eye ?

Not yet, not yet, thy wondrous joy
Is filled to its mysterious brim ;
Thou hast another sight to see
To which this vision is but dim.

Jesus into His Mother's heart
A special gift of strength did pour,
That she might bear what none had borne,
Amid the sons of earth before.

Oh, let not words be bold to tell
What in the Mother's heart was done,
When for a moment Mary saw
The unshrouded Godhead of her Son.*

* Faber.

XXXVIII

EASTER MORNING.

“This is the day which the Lord has made.”—Ps. cxvii.

FULL of love, but sadly wanting in faith, the holy women rose early on Easter morning and came to the sepulchre. They were going to “anoint Jesus.” His sacred body, they thought, lay in Joseph’s tomb, and they were coming that Easter morning to finish the hurried embalming of Friday evening. Once more they must look at those ghastly wounds, once more see that loved face, all bruised and beaten. They carried with them vases of sweet spices, bought after sunset on the Sabbath evening and prepared during the night. Quickly they came, longing, yet dreading to begin their task.

That the sepulchre was guarded by Roman soldiers, and sealed by the Sanhedrists, the holy women did not know, but the thought of the huge slab rolled to the door troubled them. “Who shall roll us back the stone from the door of the sepulchre?” they said to one another. Yet, though they could find no

answer to the question, they went bravely forward, putting their trust in God.

Scarcely had they come within distant sight of the sepulchre than they heard the same rumbling sound and felt the same shock which struck terror into the guard. "There was a great earthquake. For an angel of the Lord descended from Heaven, and coming, rolled back the stone and sat upon it. And his countenance was as lightning, and his raiment as snow." He spoke to the women :

"Fear not you," he said, "for I know that you seek Jesus, Who was crucified. He is not here, for He is risen, as He said. Come, and see the place where the Lord was laid. And going quickly, tell ye His disciples that He is risen. Behold, He will go before you into Galilee. There you shall see Him."

With rapt attention the women listened, and joy filled their hearts—a joy that no man could take from them. Jesus, their Lord and Master, was risen from the dead! He had triumphed over His enemies and over death. He had joined together in immortal life what death had separated, it seemed, for ever. He had been dead, and He was living. "O death, where is thy victory! O death, where is thy sting!"

They would see Him again, the angel said. And they had not long to wait. As they left the tomb, running to tell the disciples, Jesus

met them, saying, "All hail!" They saw Him, saw Him in His risen beauty. Falling at His feet, they adored.

But not to these two Maries did Jesus first appear, nor to John and Peter, though they ran at full speed to the tomb when they heard the sacred body was no longer there. To Magdalen, the penitent, Jesus came.

"Mary stood at the sepulchre without, weeping." And looking in she saw two angels sitting, one at the head and one at the feet, where the body of Jesus had been laid. They say to her :

"Woman, why weepest thou?" She said to them :

"Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him." Turning round, she saw standing beside her One Whom she supposed to be the gardener. As if echoing the angels' words, He said :

"Woman, why weepest thou? Whom seekest thou?"

"Sir," she answered respectfully, "if thou hast taken Him hence, tell me where thou hast laid Him; and I will take Him away." Only one word came in answer :

"Mary!" Magdalen's eyes were opened; she knew the features, she knew the voice. Throwing herself at His feet, she cried :

"Rabboni!" Good Master!

“Go to My brethren,” Jesus said, “and say to them, ‘I ascend to My Father and to your Father, to My God and to your God.’” Mary arose and obeyed.

It was the afternoon of Easter Sunday.

Down the mountain road leading to Emmaus went two disciples. They had turned their backs upon Jerusalem and left the company of the Apostles, weary of the sights and sounds and holy places which brought sad thoughts into their minds. Bright and glorious shone the afternoon sun, the green corn waved in the breeze, swallows flew low and flew high, skimmed the surface of the earth and soared aloft into the golden haze. Spring flowers of a thousand shades grew by the wayside, on the hill-slopes, on the pathway even. But there was no sunshine in the disciples' hearts. There was unbelief, shaken faith, gloom, and disappointment. “And they talked together of all these things which had happened”—the condemnation, the scourging, the crucifixion. What a pity they did not talk about these holy things in the right spirit! No spiritual talk should make us gloomy, not even talks on the Passion. Sad we may be, “sore distressed, like our Blessed Mother, but never gloomy, never discouraged.

Presently a Stranger drew near and, according

to Eastern customs, joined Himself to their company. His quick eye noted their downcast faces, and He said kindly :

“What are these discourses that you hold one with another as you walk, and are sad?” One of them, called Cleophas, answered for his companion and himself :

“Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the doings that have been done there in these days?”

“What things?” said the Stranger.

“Concerning Jesus of Nazareth,” they answered, astonished at the Stranger’s ignorance, “Who was a prophet, mighty in work and word before God and all the people. And how our chief priests and princes delivered Him to be condemned to death and crucified Him. But we hoped that it was He that should have redeemed Israel ; and now besides all this, to-day is the third day since these things were done. Yea, and certain women of our company affrighted us, who before it was light were at the sepulchre. And not finding His body, came, saying they had also seen a vision of angels, who say that He is alive.

“And some of our people went to the sepulchre, and found it so as the women had said, but Him they found not.”

Notwithstanding their unbelief the two disciples were loyal to our Lord’s memory. They

did not know which side the Stranger might be inclined to take—whether He would praise the action of the rulers or condemn them as impious; but they call their dead Master “a prophet, mighty in work and word before God and all the people.” There is a ring of honourable pride in the words and in the distinction drawn between His disciples and the chief priests and princes—these crucified Him, but “*we hoped.*” The pity is that they lost hope, and lost it even when outward appearances were in its favour—the report of the women, the empty sepulchre, the tale of the terror-stricken guards, all pointed to a real resurrection.

The Stranger listened without interruption. It was a long story, and it was poured out of hearts that grief had pent up. When they had finished, He said, almost severely :

“O foolish, and slow of heart to believe in all things which the prophets have spoken. Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and so to enter into His glory?”

Those words contain the whole mystery of our Lord's Passion and death. They preach the truth our Blessed Lord tried so hard to teach His own—suffering is the price of glory. He had not succeeded in His life. With these two at least He would succeed now. Beginning from the early days of their nation's history He showed His two listeners how all that had

happened to their Messiah in His life and shameful death had been foretold by Moses and the prophets, and that to be their Messiah He must be a "Man of sorrows." They listened earnestly, with downcast eyes and strangely throbbing hearts. The voice seemed familiar, the style of speaking as of one they had known and loved.

When they came to their journey's end the Stranger made as if He would pass on. He would not go with them unbidden. But the disciples could not bear to part with Him. "Stay with us," they implored, "because it is towards evening, and the day is now far spent." And they *constrained* Him; that is, made Him stay even against what seemed to be His will. Jesus went in with them.

The day was closing in, the song of the birds grew fainter, the flowers shut up their leaves, the labourers were returning from the fields. Together the three sat down to supper. And He Who was the Guest, took bread and blessed and broke and gave to them. "And their eyes were opened, and they knew Him, and He vanished out of their sight."

"Was not our heart burning within us," they said one to the other, "whilst He spoke in the way and opened to us the Scriptures?" What a change His words had wrought! Wearied and sad they had left

Jerusalem but a few hours since, with no intention of returning that day at least. And now, full of peace and joy, they retrace their steps and rejoin the Apostles in the upper room, to tell them their glorious news.

But the "joy of the Lord" was spreading fast. The two wanderers were met at the door by men with glad faces and happy greetings. "The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared to Simon," they cried. And then when the two from Emmaus could get a word in they too told their tale—how at first they did not know Him, how He explained mysteries to them, and how their hearts burned within them; how at last in the breaking of the bread they recognised Him as their Master and Lord.

Hardly was the story ended, when Jesus stood in their midst.

"Peace be to you; it is I, fear not," He said. But they were afraid, supposing they saw a spirit.

"Why are you troubled?" Jesus said, "and why do thoughts arise in your hearts? See My hands and feet, that it is I Myself; handle and see, for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as you see Me to have." And when He had said this He showed them His hands and feet. But while they yet believed not, and wondered for joy, He said, "Have you here anything to eat?" And they offered Him a

piece of boiled fish and a honeycomb. And when He had eaten before them, taking the remains, He gave to them.

How patient our Lord was with His dull Apostles, how condescending to their weakness ! They would not believe their eyes ; well, they must touch His sacred feet and hands. And timidly they touched, and looked upon Him and wondered for joy.

Now Thomas, one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came, and by what we gather from the Gospel story it would have been a great deal better for him if he had been there. When he returned, the other disciples said joyously, "We have seen the Lord." But he answered, "Except I shall see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe."

Sorrow had made Thomas hard and unlike himself. He would not believe the Apostles, not even Peter. Nor could Mary's loving words convince him. His own sight, his own touch only would he credit.

Eight days Thomas was left to his unbelief, the only sad heart, the only gloomy face in the company. The gladness of the rest jarred upon him, and their peace of heart made him

envious. He could take no part in their conversation, and could not bear to hear his beloved Master described. They were all mistaken, he maintained; such things did not happen. They had fancied, imagined the apparitions. Good, sound common-sense, Thomas called his view; but others called it by another name not so pleasant sounding.

Eight days! How long they seemed to the sullen Apostle! He was right, then, after all, and the Apostles were wrong.

Sunday came, the first day of a new week, "the disciples were within, and Thomas was with them." The doors were shut, and Jesus stood in the midst.

"Peace be to you!" He said. Thomas knew Him, and believed. All his sullen gloom disappeared; he longed to throw himself at the sacred feet, and ask forgiveness. Jesus came towards him with His hands outstretched:

"Put in thy finger hither, and see My hands," He said, "and bring hither thy hand and put it into My side; and be not faithless, but believing." As He spoke He showed the print of the nails in the glorified hands. He showed the spear-thrust in His sacred side. Deep and wide was the wound, and Thomas put in his hand.

"My Lord and my God," he cried, in joy and fear.

“Because thou hast seen Me, Thomas, thou hast believed; blessed are they that have not seen and have believed.”

“*Blessed are they that have not seen and have believed.*” Let us ask of our Lord a place amongst those blessed ones. We have not seen Him in glory, we have not seen His wounded hands and feet, but we do believe. Lord, help our unbelief!

It was evening on the Lake of Galilee. Peter was standing on the shore getting his boat ready for a launch. Around him stood six disciples. “I go a-fishing,” he had said; and they answered, “We also come with thee.” Thomas was there, joyous and bright; Nathaniel also, the brothers James and John, and two other disciples. The stars were out, the lake was calm, the night wind cold. All night they laboured and took nothing.

The sun rose, and the head of the boat was turned towards the shore. Jesus stood on the beach, yet the disciples knew not that it was Jesus.

“Children,” He cried, “have you any meat?”

“No,” they answered, shouting through the hollow of their hands.

“Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and you shall find.” Without a moment’s

delay the weary men obeyed. Down went the net with a splash, and sank in the waves. Scarcely had the noise of the sinking ceased than the fishermen felt the net grow heavy. They hauled with united strength, "and were not able to draw it for the multitude of the fishes." John, shading his eyes with his hand, looked towards the Stranger, Who stood with the full light of the rising sun upon His face. "It is the Lord!" he cried with joy. "The Lord!" cried Peter, and, leaving the care of the fish to any one, he snatched up his upper garment and leapt into the sea.

Less impetuous, but not less loving, John remained in the boat, helping his struggling companions to land the net. And when they did land, what did they see? Oh, you could never guess, no one could. A breakfast prepared, a fire kindled by the Divine hands of their Master: "*Hot coals lying and fish laid thereon and bread.*" They were hungry and cold and wet. They must sit down and eat, and rest and get warm. Meanwhile He would serve them.

But the one fish would not be sufficient, they must bring Him some of those they have themselves caught.

"Bring hither," He said, "of the fishes which you have caught." At once Peter set off to the boat and brought out one hundred and

fifty-three great fishes, and "although there were so many, the net was not broken," adds St. John with a fisherman's surprise. When all was ready Jesus said :

"Come and dine," and He settled the wearied men round the fire. Then He gave them bread to eat, and, broiling the fishes, handed them about. They took the food from His sacred hands and ate, following with their eyes all His movements as He went in and out of their little group. This was He, they said to themselves, Who had died upon the Cross, and had risen with almighty power from the tomb. And His sufferings had not dried up His love, and His glory had not made Him forget them, His lowly ones. He was the same Master, Jesus, meek and humble of heart. A feeling of reverent awe fell upon them. "And none of them, who were at meat, durst ask Him, 'Who art Thou?' knowing that it was the Lord."

When the meal was over, Jesus turned to Peter and said solemnly :

"Simon, son of John, lovest thou Me more than these?"

"Yea, Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee," he answered quickly.

"Feed My lambs," Jesus replied. Again He said with the same solemnity :

"Simon, son of John, lovest thou Me?"

"Yea, Lord," Peter said, "Thou knowest that I love Thee." Again Jesus repeated the same words.

"Simon, son of John, lovest thou Me?" Three times Peter had denied, three times he must confess his love. He understood our Lord's meaning, and, full of grief and self-distrust, answered :

"Lord, Thou knowest all things ; Thou knowest that I love Thee." Jesus said to Him :

"Feed My sheep."

"*Lovest thou Me?*" By loving, Peter was to repair his fault, by loving he was to make amends to God and to man. He had sinned *more than these*, he must love more than they. By much loving Magdalen had had much forgiven, by much love Peter was to wipe away much sin.

Jesus had more to say to Peter that bright summer morning. He had a reward to give him, a double reward, such as He gives to His great friends—*labour and the cross*. Like the rest of the Apostles, he was to *feed the lambs* of the flock, to teach the little and simple. And hard work it was to be. But unlike them, to Peter was given the charge of the *sheep*. "*Feed My sheep*," Jesus had said, and by those words He placed him over His whole Church,

“over a chosen generation, a kingly priesthood, a purchased people.”

Peter was to have the cross, and the cross not only of suffering and pain, but the Cross of the Crucified, such as his Master had had before him.

“Amen, amen, I say to Thee,” Jesus said, “when thou wast younger, thou didst gird thyself and didst walk where thou wouldst. But when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee and lead thee whither thou wouldst not.”

The words were mysterious, but Peter understood. He was to die the death of the Cross. He had heard how Jesus had stretched out His hands to the executioners, and how He had been girded with rough cords and hauled up on the Cross. Peter did not shrink from the thought of a cruel martyrdom. He did not say in horror, as once before, “Far be it from me, Lord.” The likeness to his Master on the Cross soothed the shame to him, and he rejoiced to think he should glorify God by his death.

Turning round he caught sight of John following them. Was he also going to glorify God by his death? he wondered. Pointing to the Beloved Disciple, he said familiarly: “Lord, what shall this man do?” John’s future was no business of Peter’s. Let Him

leave him to the Master he loved so well. Very gently, almost playfully, our Lord answered :

“ So I will have him remain until I come, what is it to thee? Follow thou Me.”

Both Peter and John followed our Lord, Peter by invitation and John without. So well did they know “ Him Whom they had believed.”

These are some of the beautiful stories the Gospels tell us of our Lord's risen life upon earth. Why, we might ask, did Jesus come back from the tomb, and walk with men, and eat with them, and serve them as He had done before He died? There are many reasons—to strengthen the faith of the Apostles, to kindle their love, to give them power, to prove His Godhead. “ If Christ is not risen from the dead, then is our faith void,” St. Paul says. But He did rise from the dead, and He proved His resurrection by appearing to many. He appeared to the holy women, to Mary Magdalen, to St. Peter, and to St. James ; He appeared to the eleven disciples often, and “ to more than five hundred brethren at once,” St. Paul says. (1 Cor. xv.)

Perhaps there was another reason—to show His gracious kindness. When our dear ones die, what we feel most in their death is the silence of the grave. We think of them and

cherish things they left behind; we pray for them, give alms to help them, and get Masses said for the repose of their souls. But never a word comes back from the other world. We cannot see the relief they feel, we do not hear that they are benefited. We believe firmly that they are; we trust, yet there is always the complete separation, the unbroken silence. If, when our Lord died and rose again, He had visited His Mother in secret and had ascended to His Father without granting one look to His disciples, without saying one loving word to those He left on earth—think what a difference this would have made to us! Theologians would have told us that Jesus Christ can never change, that He is the same yesterday, to-day, and to-morrow. But could we have imagined or dared to believe that Jesus, risen and glorious, was as human, as tender, as humble, as devoted as Jesus Who washed the Apostles' feet and bore the Cross to Calvary?

Oh, it was gracious and loving of Him to come back to earth and fill our hearts with joy and gladness, to make us feel that He not only forgives but forgets our injuries, that He never reproaches the penitent with their sins, that His sufferings are only remembered by Him as things that had to be. Which of us could have thought of Jesus risen as a companion in our walks, a guest at our meals, a servant to make

our fire and prepare our food, unless we had seen Him at Emmaus, in the cenacle, and on the beach of the Galilee lake?

Not for a day or two only did Jesus come back—He could not show His love in so short a time. For forty days He lingered on earth, sanctifying the place of His feet, blessing the land with His presence, comforting, strengthening, making glad all who came near Him.

And then the day of parting came.

XXXIX.

THE KING OF ETERNAL GLORY.

“Let the Eternal Gates be thrown open.”—Ps. xxiii.

FORTY days Jesus spent with His eleven, giving them His last instructions, and promising them that they should *be baptised with the Holy Ghost not many days hence*. Then He led them out of Jerusalem, through the vineyards and olive yards, across the brook Kedron, past Gethsemani on the left, on to the Bethany road. The Apostles talked to Him all the time; they were overflowing with happiness. Things dark and hidden had been made clear. His sufferings were the cause of His triumph; His blood was the price of redemption. Even those puzzling words of His were clear now, they thought: “A little while and you shall not see Me, and again a little while and you shall see Me.” He had been away from them and He had come back endowed with new powers, with a more glorious beauty, and they “loved to contemplate the loveliness of their Lord.” Now, surely, He would establish His kingdom, He would manifest Himself as “Prince and Saviour.” He was not bound by time nor

space ; His enemies now could have no power over Him. What was there to prevent His reigning gloriously ? With great simplicity they put the question to our Lord : “ Lord, wilt Thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel ? ” Jesus did not satisfy their curiosity.

“ It is not for you to know the times or moments which the Father has put in His own power,” He said ; yet He told them a secret of the future which *was* for them to know. “ You shall receive the power of the Holy Ghost coming upon you, and you shall be witnesses unto Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and Samaria, and even to the uttermost parts of the earth.” So a kingdom was to be established, and they themselves were the chosen founders, and like a generous sovereign He gave them ample power and authority.

“ Go ye into the whole world, and preach the Gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved ; but he that believeth not shall be condemned. And these signs shall follow them that believe : in My name they shall cast out devils ; they shall speak with new tongues ; they shall take up serpents ; and if they shall drink any deadly thing it shall not hurt them ; they shall lay hands upon the sick, and they shall recover.”

The midday sun shone gloriously over Mount

Olivet as Jesus and His disciples went up its eastern slope. His hour had come. He had finished His work. He was going to His Father, going to "Mount Sion, to the city of the living God, the Heavenly Jerusalem, and to the company of many thousands of angels."

Lifting up His hands He blessed them. And whilst He blessed them, He departed from them ; and while they looked on He was raised up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight." The eternal gates had been lifted up, the King of eternal glory had entered in. Jesus was gone.

The Apostles stood rooted to the spot. Was He gone for ever to the home of His Father? Was this the glory He meant when He said, "Glorify Me, O Father, with the glory which I had before the world was, with Thee." Two angels in shining white garments stood by their side and said, as if in answer to their thought :

"Ye men of Galilee, why stand you looking up to Heaven? This Jesus, Who is taken up from you into Heaven, shall so come as you have seen Him going into Heaven." "*Into Heaven!*" Their loving hearts were satisfied. Jesus, their Master and their God, had gone to His "high and glorious throne." His from the beginning, before the world was. "Adoring, with great joy they went back to Jerusalem."



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